

N E B R A S K A

SPORTS

November 1995

Magazine

HUSKER COVERAGE:

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Poster!**

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HEROS
IN THE NFL**

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GOING THE OTHER WAY

Nebraska's defense forced five fumbles against Missouri, recovering two, including this second quarter bobble by Tiger running back Brock Olivo, which was picked up by Jared Tomich (bottom right).

Photo by Eric Francis

NEBRASKA

SPORTS

Volume 2, No. 8

Magazine

COVER STORY

10 Familiar Faces in the NFL

Whether they played for the Huskers or grew up in Nebraska, these pros haven't forgotten their roots.
Story by Nick Schinker

16 Odd Man Out

Nebraska quarterback Matt Turman is out to prove that he's nobody's backup.
Story by Sean Weide Photos by Eric Francis

22 1995-96 Basketball Preview

Meet six impact players on the high school, college and professional levels:

- Alton Mason, Lincoln Northeast High School
- Eric Strickland, University of Nebraska-Lincoln
- John Skokan, University of Nebraska at Omaha
- Jennifer Warner, University of Nebraska at Kearney
- Tad Ackerman, Creighton University
- Bruce Chubick, Omaha Racers

SPECIAL REPORT

31 Volleyball Dynasty

Bellevue West High School's care-free attitude breeds success. The proof is in the trophy case.
Story by Cory Golden Photos by Eric Francis

40 A Day in the Life of a Lancer

Nick Lent is one of many Lancers players who have come to Omaha to play hockey, go to school and enjoy life off the ice.
Photos by Eric Francis

DEPARTMENTS

- | | | | |
|----|---|----|---|
| 4 | Letters to NSM | 39 | Commentary |
| 5 | Out of Bounds!
by Jim Rose | | Little League Football – Too Serious, Too Soon? |
| 6 | Inside Nebraska Sports | 46 | The Lineup |
| 7 | NSM Athlete of the Month | 48 | Sports Town Nebraska
by Dan Silvia |
| 9 | Boom Right Here!
by Gary Java | 54 | Where Are They Now?
by Mike Friend |
| 28 | Poster | 58 | Between the Lines
by John Knicely |
| 38 | Blue Chips | | |

On the cover: Jay Novacek of the Dallas Cowboys. Photo by Don Liebig

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Publishing a monthly magazine doesn't always allow us to address timely sports stories of interest as quickly as we would like. But thanks to the addition of our site on the World Wide Web, we hope to bring Internet users around the world the best coverage of Nebraska sports.

For the last three months, we've electronically published excerpts from the magazine at our site (<http://www.nesports.com>). Along with these

"teasers" from the magazine, visitors to the NSM home page have enjoyed same-day coverage of Nebraska football games, weekly high school football ratings and full-color action photos of other sports.

Don't log onto our site expecting the latest daily sports scores or feature stories. We'll leave that to ESPN SportsZone. But for the best same-day coverage of University of Nebraska football and basketball games, along with the latest news about high school, collegiate and professional sports in Nebraska, we're definitely the place to be on the 'net.

The NSM web site is particularly active on Husker football game days. That's when staff photographer Eric Francis and I go to work. Beginning about one hour before the game, we post pregame reports, including the latest news about any key injury situations. Once the game begins, we post a "running" account of the game, including statistics, which are updated after each quarter.

Less than an hour after the game, we post a complete game story, final offensive and defensive statistics and a post-game "notes and quotes" section. As of this writing, we are making arrangements to get our full-color "jpeg" photos posted on the site during and after the game.

We're looking forward to expanding our site and bringing you even more news and features in the coming months, including extensive coverage of Nebraska's bowl game. We hope you enjoy our site. Be sure to e-mail us with your suggestions (usasports@aol.com) story ideas or comments.



Sean Weide

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Husker HOPS

1995-96

1995-1996 UNL Men's Basketball

Day	Date	Opponent	Location	Time
Wed.	Nov. 8	Spalding Americas*	Lincoln	TBA
Thu.	Nov. 16	Team Pella*	Lincoln	7:05 p.m.
BIG ISLAND INVITATIONAL • HILO, HI				
Fri.	Nov. 25	NU vs. Toledo		7:15 p.m.
Sat.	Nov. 26	Wichita State/Utah State	TBA	
Sun.	Nov. 27	Minnesota/Valparaiso/Oregon/Hawaii-Hilo		
AMERITAS CLASSIC • LINCOLN, NE				
Fri.	Dec. 1	NU vs. Georgia Southern	6:30 p.m.	
		Pepperdine vs. Grambling State		8:30 p.m.**
Sat.	Dec. 2	Consolation		1:00 p.m.
		Championship		**3:10 p.m.
Wed.	Dec. 6	Creighton	Omaha	7:05 p.m.
Sat.	Dec. 9	Minnesota	Minneapolis	6:00 p.m.
Sat.	Dec. 16	Northern Iowa	Lincoln	7:05 p.m.
Mon.	Dec. 18	Northeastern Illinois	Lincoln	7:05 p.m.
Thur.	Dec. 21	Delaware State	Lincoln	7:05 p.m.
FAR WEST CLASSIC • PORTLAND, OR				
Fri.	Dec. 29	NU vs. Oregon		8:30 p.m.
		Oregon St. vs. Mississippi St.		10:45 p.m.
Sat.	Dec. 30	Consolation		8:30 p.m.
		Championship		10:45 p.m.
Wed.	Jan. 3	Texas	Lincoln	7:05 p.m.
Sat.	Jan. 6	Long Beach State	Lincoln	7:05 p.m.
Wed.	Jan. 10	Colorado	Lincoln	7:05 p.m.
Sat.	Jan. 13	Oklahoma (Creative Sports)	Norman	12:45 p.m.
Wed.	Jan. 17	Missouri-Kansas City	Lincoln	7:05 p.m.
Sat.	Jan. 20	Oklahoma St. (Creative Sports)	Stillwater	12:45 p.m.
Wed.	Jan. 24	Missouri	Lincoln	7:05 p.m.
Sun.	Jan. 28	Kansas (CBS)	Lincoln	2:00 p.m.
Wed.	Jan. 31	Kansas State	Manhattan	7:05 p.m.
Sat.	Feb. 3	Iowa State (Creative Sports)	Lincoln	12:45 p.m.
Wed.	Feb. 7	Missouri	Lincoln	7:05 p.m.
Sat.	Feb. 10	Iowa State (Creative Sports)	Ames	12:45 p.m.
Sat.	Feb. 17	Oklahoma State	Lincoln	8:05 p.m.
Mon.	Feb. 19	Kansas (ESPN)	Lawrence	8:30 p.m.
Sun.	Feb. 25	Oklahoma (Creative Sports)	Lincoln	12:00 p.m.
Wed.	Feb. 28	Colorado	Boulder	8:00 p.m.
Sun.	Mar. 3	Kansas State	Lincoln	1:05 p.m.

PHILLIPS 66 BIG EIGHT TOURNAMENT • KANSAS CITY, MO
Fri., Mar. 8 - Sun., Mar. 10 (Creative Sports & ESPN)

1995-1996 UNL Women's Basketball

Day	Date	Opponent	Location	Time
Tue.	Nov. 7	Athletes In Action	Lincoln	TBA
Sun.	Nov. 19	Sport Tours	Lincoln	2:00 p.m.
CABLE VISION CLASSIC • LINCOLN, NE				
Fri.	Nov. 24	NU vs. Gonzaga		6:00 p.m.
Fri.	Nov. 24	James Madison vs. Weber State		8:00 p.m.
Sat.	Nov. 25	Cable Vision Consolation		1:00 p.m.
Sat.	Nov. 25	Cable Vision Championship		3:00 p.m.
Tue.	Nov. 28	Sam Houston State	Lincoln	7:00 p.m.
OREGON STATE CLASSIC • CORVALLIS, OR (Team Pairings & Times TBA)				
Fri., Dec. 1 - Sat., Dec. 2: Montana St., NU, Portland & Oregon St.				
Wed.	Dec. 6	Kent State	Kent, OH	7:00 p.m.
Fri.	Dec. 8	Michigan	Lincoln	7:00 p.m.
Sun.	Dec. 10	Nicholls State	Lincoln	2:00 p.m.
CAROLINAS HOLIDAY BEACH CLASSIC • MYRTLE BEACH, S.C.				
Tues., Dec. 19 - Thur., Dec. 21: Appalachian St., Coastal Carolina, Georgia, Iowa, NU, North Carolina, South Alabama, South Carolina St.				
Tues.	Dec. 19	South Alabama	Myrtle Beach	1:00 p.m.
Sat.	Dec. 30	Creighton	Lincoln	7:00 p.m.
Fri.	Jan. 5	Oklahoma	Norman	7:00 p.m.
Sun.	Jan. 7	Oklahoma State	Stillwater	2:00 p.m.
Fri.	Jan. 12	Kansas	Lincoln	7:00 p.m.
Sat.	Jan. 14	Kansas State	Lincoln	2:00 p.m.
Fri.	Jan. 19	Missouri	Columbia	7:00 p.m.
Sun.	Jan. 21	Colorado	Boulder	2:00 p.m.
Sun.	Jan. 28	Iowa State	Ames	2:00 p.m.
Fri.	Feb. 2	Oklahoma State	Lincoln	7:00 p.m.
Sun.	Feb. 4	Oklahoma	Lincoln	2:00 p.m.
Fri.	Feb. 9	Kansas State	Manhattan	7:00 p.m.
Sun.	Feb. 11	Kansas	Lawrence	2:00 p.m.
Wed.	Feb. 14	Colorado	Lincoln	7:00 p.m.
Sun.	Feb. 18	Missouri	Lincoln	2:00 p.m.
Fri.	Feb. 23	Iowa State	Lincoln	2:00 p.m.

BIG EIGHT TOURNAMENT • SALINA, KS

Sat.	Mar. 2	First Round	TBA
Sun.	Mar. 3	Semifinals	TBA
Mon.	Mar. 4	Championship Game	TBA

Times listed are local at the site of the contest.

*Exhibition game; ** or 30 minutes after the first game.



'A Terrific Photo'

We recently received our October issue of Nebraska Sports Magazine and couldn't wait to comment about the Ahman Green centerfold.

What a terrific photo by Eric Francis. Let's see more players featured in this manner. I can imagine that fans will consider this a "collectable."

Keep up the good work and pass along our congratulations to the entire staff on another outstanding issue.

Ann Geppert
Omaha, Neb.

'Loved The Poster'

The October issue was your best yet. I loved the poster of Ahman Green. It's too bad you didn't include a nice frame with it.

You have a nice little magazine, dedicated to Nebraska sports of all types and the price is right. I'm sending my renewal notice in today.

Warren Conner
Omaha, Neb.

On The Christmas Gift List

I couldn't believe you were celebrating your first anniversary. Where have you been hiding?

Your young staff has put out a very class magazine. The articles are very interesting and informative with excellent photos. You've solved part of my Christmas gift list. Keep up the good work.

Salesia Pinneto
Omaha, Neb.

More On The Lancers

Kudos to Nebraska Sports Magazine. What wonderful coverage of everything from high school football to the mighty Huskers! I especially enjoyed "They Call It The Streak" in your September issue. The only thing missing is coverage of the Omaha Lancers. Mike Hastings and the boys on the cover would be certain to attract many new readers. Keep up the good work.

Amy Begley
Omaha, Neb.

"Damon Benning is to be commended for his extraordinary poise in the face of untruths and accusations by the media."

Mary Ellen Beckwright
Colorado Springs, Colo.

What About Turman?

I enjoy reading your magazine. The article on Tommie Frazier and Brook Berringer was very nice but when will you do an article on the "other" quarterback, Matt Turman?

He's a home-grown Nebraska boy and we are very proud of him.

Angie Kuderna
Wahoo, Neb.

See our story about Matt in this issue, page 20.

— Editor

Irish Streak Still Going

Enjoyed your feature story on the Falls City Sacred Heart football team and "The Streak" (September 1995). I plan to send it to John Gillis at the National Federation of State High School Associations in Kansas City and Bill Seitter, Principal and Athletic Director at Morrison (Okla.) High School (current outright holder of the national record).

Your article was wonderful recognition for the Sacred Heart Irish, a team

that holds the state record for consecutive state championships (six) in Class D-2, eight-man football and the longest win-streak ever in the state of Nebraska.

Art Parchen
Overland Park, Kan.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Letters

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World Wide Web

Nebraska Sports Magazine's site on the World Wide Web (<http://www.nesports.com>) offers current and past articles from the magazine, photos, high school football and basketball ratings and special game-day coverage of Nebraska football.



Onward, Christian Peter!

HIS EYES ARE A FAITHFUL disguise. These players put pressure on their eyes. They call it "the look." It's the look that frightens opposing quarterbacks. It's the look that causes offensive linemen to tremble with anticipation; anticipation of the variance of defeat. It's the look that causes opposing college football players to strongly consider life after football.

Then, in a seeming contradiction of his name, he boasts, "It's a violent, rough game. I like hitting. That's got to be the most rewarding part — when you get a running back coming up the middle and you flat out lay him out. That's exciting!"

Sometimes, that's all the other guy remembers, the whites of his eyes.

Onward, Christian.

All of this is one half of Christian Peter's guild. The other half extends from his eyes to caverns of his heart and often, physiologically further south. He counters, "I'm no saint, but I'm not a bad guy and can't a guy get a chance to grow up a little?" Problem was, his body and ego grew at a

much faster rate than his maturity.

Peter came to Nebraska backed up inside his own academic and social five-yard line. It took more effort to organize his studies, get to class and pay attention than he ever had to expend as a star high school player in New Jersey. His progress in football slowed to a trickle. He vented his frustration in the wrong ways. At the height of those regrettable days, Christian would consume beer to excess and overly abuse women both verbally and with unwanted physical advances. He's serving probation for third degree sexual assault. Recently, a woman came forward alleging Christian raped her his freshman year.

Nebraskans are left to wonder if football helps to cure or exacerbate this unsavory behavior. Lawrence Phillips, the starting I-back assaulted his girlfriend and was kicked off the team. Current cornerback Tyrone Williams faces felony weapons charges. Wingback Riley Washington was arrested for attempted murder. Former teammate Abdul Muhammad is suspected by Lincoln police to have ties to street gangs while currently serving as a graduate assistant coach. Peter admits that Nebraska, like all football teams, has a small collection of reprobates. Nevertheless, he staunchly defends the therapeutic side of the game,

"Football has actually been my savior in a couple of ways. The only reason I've been able to stay together is because of my teammates and the support I get from them. It just seems like whenever I go through a bad situation, there's football. It's very comforting."

Wait a minute! Say what? Christian Peter, the Norman Vincent Peale of Pain seeking comfort? There it was! Did you see it? For just an instant, the eyes exposed a brute of a guy who would kill to protect his family, who cherishes his kid sister, who is sick over the freak swimming accident that injured a brother, but thanks God every snap for a second brother who happens to be the guy next to him on the defensive line.

"Jason and I talk a lot. That helps. Sometimes you gotta go through things to get something out of it. My hard times are in the past. I think I've grown up and matured a lot through this process."

The rest of the Huskers have taken note of the progress. They voted Christian a co-captain this past summer. I think they did that in part because, like the team, Christian Peter set a goal and overcame the obstacles to meet it. Every down confronts players with the ultimate challenge of physical and mental success or failure. For Christian, those challenges came off the field with almost more

regularity. In the beginning, he was an embarrassment to the program, whose exploits caused harm to the rest of the players' pristine image. In that regard, Christian wasn't part of the rest of them. He's earned his welcome back into the fraternity with bone vaporizing tackles on Saturday and an honest effort at humility the rest of the week.

All of this for Peter without losing the edge, without losing his touch. "When the ball is about to be snapped, I look up and see the quarterback's eyes and you can tell, he's kinda . . . you know, frightened. I wonder what he sees in my eyes?"

Keep them guessing; but not for too long. *NSM*

Jim Rose is the host of "SportsDay Mid-America with Jim Rose," a nightly radio call-in show.

FALL SPORTS CHAMPIONSHIPS UNDERWAY

The month of October signaled the start of the state high school sports championships.

At press time, champions had been decided in four sports – boys tennis, girls golf, cross country and softball. Gymnastics, football and volleyball will be covered next month.

In Class A boys tennis, the Lincoln East boys won an unprecedented eighth straight state title, defeating Millard South. In Class B, Grand Island Central Catholic repeated as champion.

Kearney's girls won their second straight Class A golf title, shooting a record first-round score. Holdrege won in its second Class B title in three years, led by gold medalist Erin Christensen.

Kelly Lindsey captured her third straight Class A title but Lincoln Southeast won its seventh straight girls cross country team title. Kearney's boys won Class A, helped by a 1-2 finish by Brandon



Photo by Eric Francis

Jay Bemis of Millard South won the Class A No. 1 singles crown over Lincoln East's Clark Teft.

Jessop and Marcus Witter.

York's boys won their fourth straight Class B crown while Malcolm's boys successfully defended their Class D title. Mount Michael unseated Minden to win Class C.

Other girls team champions were: Aurora (Class B), Wayne (Class C) and Geneva (Class D).

In the state softball championship final in Omaha, Papillion-LaVista defeated Ralston 6-1.

STATE WINTER GAMES TO DEBUT IN 1996

With temperatures outdoors approaching a record high Oct. 11, officials of the Cornhuskers State Games announced plans for the state's first winter games.

Tom Ash, executive director of the State Games steering committee, addressed a crowd of about 65 dignitaries, event organizers and members of the media at the Ak-Sar-Ben Clubhouse.

Ash said the Cornhusker State Winter Games are expected to draw between 5,000 and 6,000 participants to the Omaha area Feb. 9-11, 1996.

In contrast, the Summer Games, now in its 11th year, drew 20,000 competitors in 44 sports to the Lincoln area last year.

Omaha Mayor Hal Daub said the Winter Games have the financial backing of the city and the organizational support of the Parks and Recreation Dept.

"I see this fitting in well with the city's other major events like the College World Series and River City Roundup," Daub said.

Competition will be offered in 16 sports, including cross-country skiing (at Mahoney State Park), volleyball (at the University of Nebraska at Omaha field-house), snowboarding (at Mount Crescent Ski Resort in Iowa) and indoor soccer (at Creighton University and Offutt Air Force Base). Registration opens Dec. 1. NSM

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WHEREVER KELLY Lindsey runs, she usually becomes a topic of conversation among cross-country fans, coaches and even her fellow competitors.

She likes to lead right from the start and she often runs the entire 4,000-meter course alone in front. She never looks back.

That contentious style has prevented anyone from defeating Lindsey during her first three years of running cross country for Millard North High School.

With her latest win at the State Meet Oct. 20, the Nebraska Sports Magazine November Athlete of the Month is on pace to join a select group of runners in Nebraska history who have won four individual state cross country titles.

To date, only Shona Jones of Hastings has won four individual crowns, having dominated Class A from 1982 to 1985. But next season, another junior — Amber Fairbanks of Class D Geneva — will also be going for her fourth straight title.

Lindsey's athletic success extends to other sports as well.

At 5-foot-7, she has been the second-leading scorer — averaging nine points and three rebounds a game — on the Mustangs' basketball team that has qualified for the state tournament the past two years. As an all-state midfielder on the school's soccer team, she helped Millard North win the Class A state title her freshman year and finish as runner-up

last year.

Which sport does she like the best?

"Soccer, definitely," she said. "I don't know what it is about soccer — it's like chess at a hundred miles an hour and I love that type of competition."

Rarely challenged in cross country, Lindsey has accustomed herself to becoming her own toughest competitor.

"Before a race, I set the time I want to get and then run as fast as I can and hope I get that time. After three years, you expect people to be shooting for you. You just have to be mentally tough enough to run harder than them the entire race."

Mike Neemann, who has coached at Millard North since the school opened in 1980, said his coaching role is a limited one in Lindsey's case. Much of her practice time is spent running with the Mustangs' boys cross-country team.

"We talk about the courses a little bit," Neemann said. "She didn't feel very good about winning the Metro Conference meet because she didn't feel like she won it by enough. I just tell her to go out

and do her best. She just has a lot of pride and doesn't like to get beat."

Lindsey said she alone — not her coach, her teammates or her family — puts on the pressure. Her only goal is to help Millard North someday win the Class A team title. The Mustangs have finished

as runners-up the last three years.

"I tell myself that I'm going to run harder each meet she said. "If I don't, I'm going to run harder the next week."

That work ethic is bound to keep Lindsey a step ahead of the rest of the pack. **NSM**

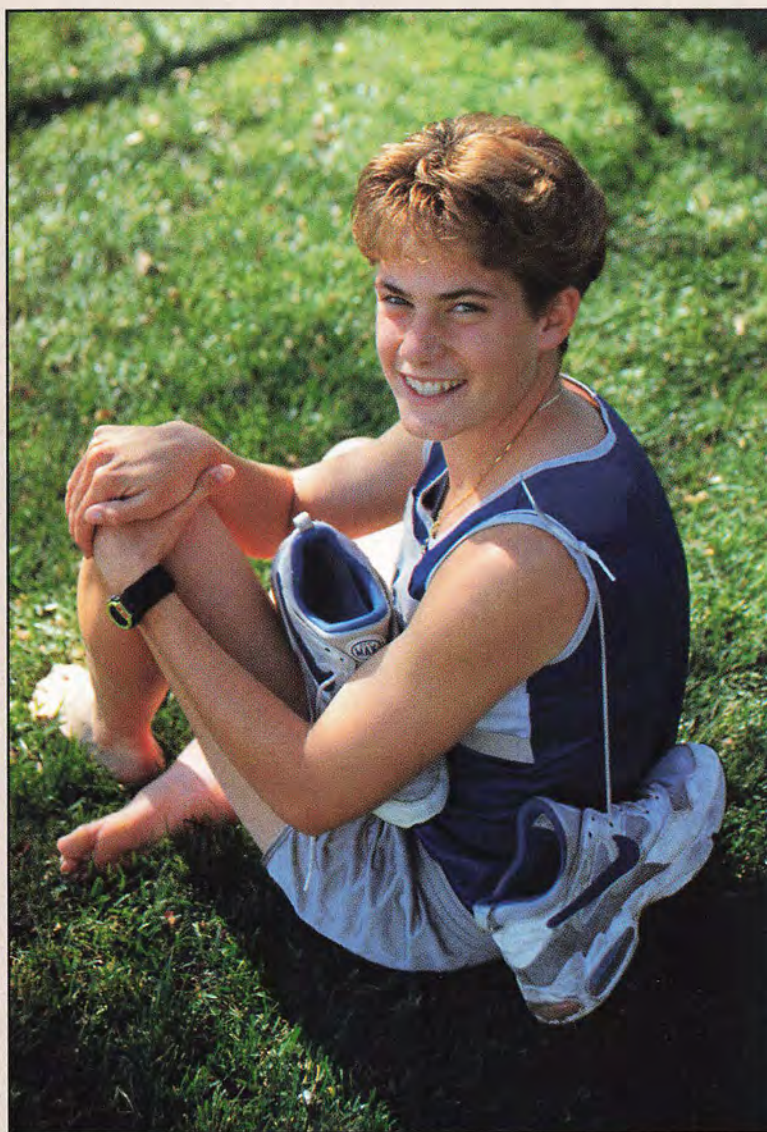
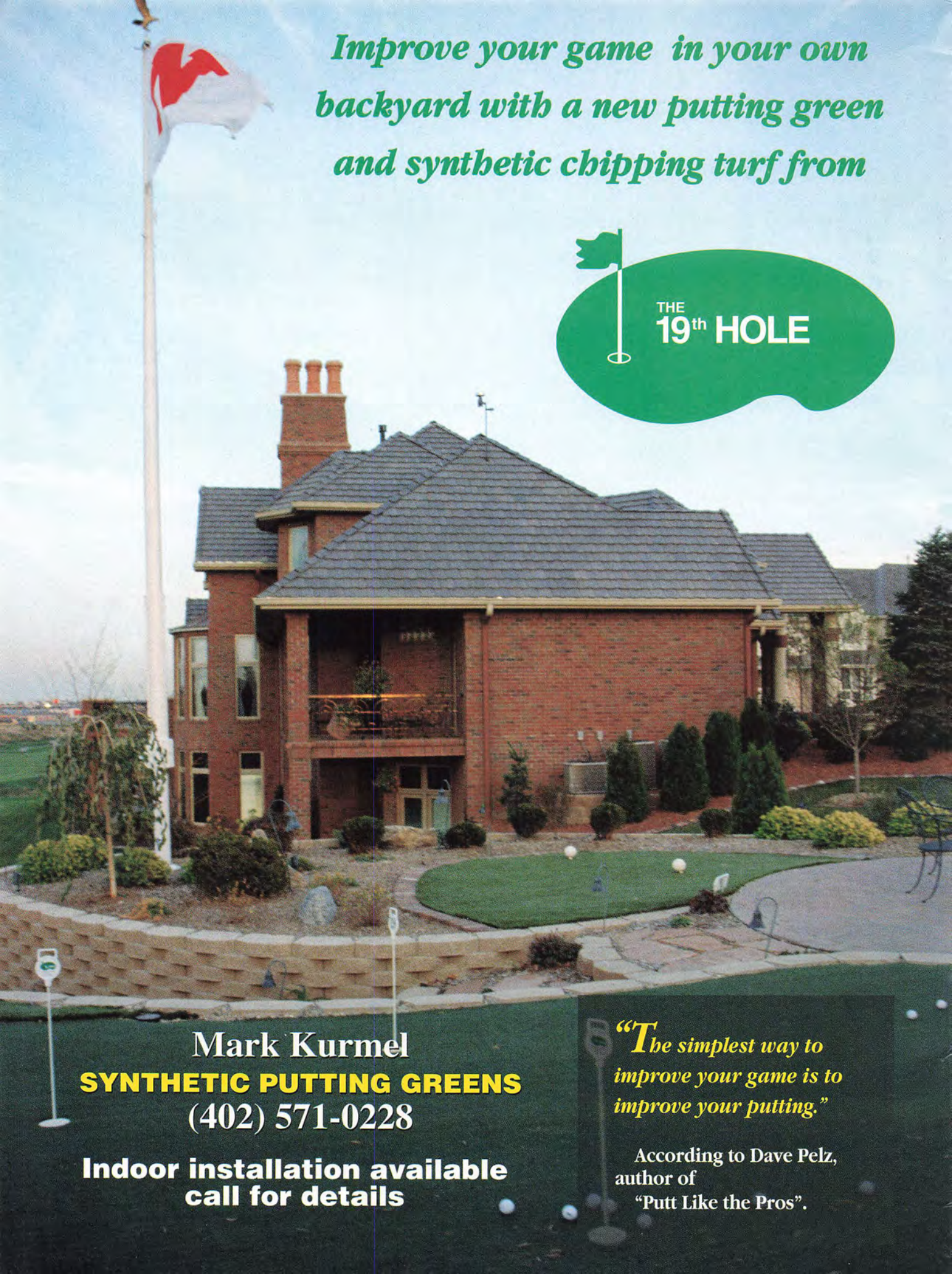


Photo by Eric Francis

Kelly Lindsey

by Sean Weide

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Ya Wanna Start A Fight?

SO I'M LUNCHING WITH my buddy Steve Lundy and he asks me if I know any good criminal attorneys.

And bein' a good buddy, I rip off free legal names who have gotten me off with community service in the past. And, bein' a good buddy, I don't even ask why. I figure if and/or when "Lundo" — that's what Tagge calls him — wants to tell me why he needs an attorney, he'll tell me. Otherwise — that's the business. It's a guy thing.

But, bein' a buddy, he doesn't make me ask! He opens up! He confides in me! Mano-a-Mano! Guy-to-guy! Montana-to-Rice! Bukich-to-Morris! Just a coupla' of caring, sensitive '90s kinda guys bein' there for each other! Ya' know what I mean, America?! He tells me — the reason he needs a criminal attorney is — he and a buddy got into a nasty, WWF, laser fight over who is the all-time greatest Kansas City Chief. Whoa, Nelli!

I asked him how many guys they got it narrowed to. He said three: Bobby Bell, Otis Taylor and Lenny Dawson. He said No. 16. His deceased buddy said Bobby Bell (I hope 'ol "78" appreciates being the last words of some former guy from Fremont, Neb.). I almost started another fight, but I kept Elmo Wright to myself.

But then, of course, if

you're talkin' the "most popular player of all time" category — well, that's a whole 'nother can-of-a-different-color, so to speak. Then, of course, I'm sure we all agree, the answer is E.J. Holub.

Is that a great way to start a fight or what?

I tried that in the newsroom a few days later, mentioning some other popular NFL franchises, and now that the casts are off my hands and I can type again, here's a few more "all-time greatest-in-franchise-history" categories that you can bring up in a sports bar the next time you're wondering if you can still take a good shot to the head.

Baltimore/Indy Colts: (Let's get the easiest franchise out of the way first) Johnny U. (with all due respect to Gino Marchetti, Lydell "Slydell" Mitchell, Jim Parker, Lenny Moore and Norm Bulaich).

Buffalo Bills: (another easy franchise) "The Juice" (regrets to the late Tom Sestak, Cookie Gilchrist, Mack Yoho and Elbert "Golden Wheels" Dubenion).

Dallas Cowboys: Roger Staubach. But Bob Lilly, Emmitt Smith, Tony Dorsett, Jethro Pugh, Raphael Wright and "the beautiful" Harvey Martin got some consideration. (I know, some of you can't tell which ones I'm serious about.)

Chicago Bears: See what I mean. This can get

tough! Is Walter Payton the greatest Chicago Bear of all time! What about that Butkus guy? How 'bout Halas' boy, Sid Luckman. Not to mention Rick Casares, Joe Fortunato and Joe Scarpatti.

Washington Redskins: If you apply the "Sid Luckman factor" we used in the Bears category, ya' gotta vote "slingin' Sammy Baugh" as the all-time greatest Redskin, but I'm sure some of you can make cases for Sonny Jurgenson, Art Monk, Joe Jacoby, Don Bossler and Chris Hamburger (OK, I always like his name.).

N.Y. Football Giants: Three-way tie between Tucker Frederickson, Ernie Koy and Mel Triplett. OK, I'm kidding. But which way do you go? Y.A. Tittle? Frank Gifford? L.T.? Homer Jones?

Green Bay Packers: Put your mouth guards in and buckle up. Don Hutson, Bart Starr, Ray Nitschke, Herb Adderly, Don Majkowski and Chuck Mercein can keep a fight going a few rounds, can't they?

Minnesota Vikings: (Remember, we're talking all-time greatest, not the all-time most popular. Otherwise Jim Marshall might be the winner.) Is Fran Tarkenton the guy? Alan Page? Mick Tinglehoff? Chuck Foreman? Anthony Carter? Chris Carter? Stu Voight? (my choice as the greatest blue-



collar tight end of all-time).

Sorry, I'm outta space. And speaking of sorry — there's some really sorry franchises out there where it's hard to come up with one or more great players — like Tampa Bay, Atlanta and New Orleans. (OK — Lucius Selmon, Tommy Nobis and Archie Manning).

Like my Dad used to say, once in awhile, it's nice to know you can still take a good shot to the head. 

Gary Java is the host of KKAR "Sports Talk," a nightly radio call-in show and "Boom Right Here," a weekly cable television show.

Whether they played
for the Huskers or grew up
in Nebraska, these pros
haven't forgotten their roots

By Nick Schinker

They haven't forgotten. Jay Novacek fondly recalled fall mornings spent with his best friend hunting in south-central Nebraska.

Will Shields, Zach Wiegert and Cory Schlesinger said they'll never forget the atmosphere — the raw energy — in Lincoln's Memorial Stadium on game days.

Irving Fryar said he still considers his time at the University of Nebraska the foundation of a 12-year career in the NFL.

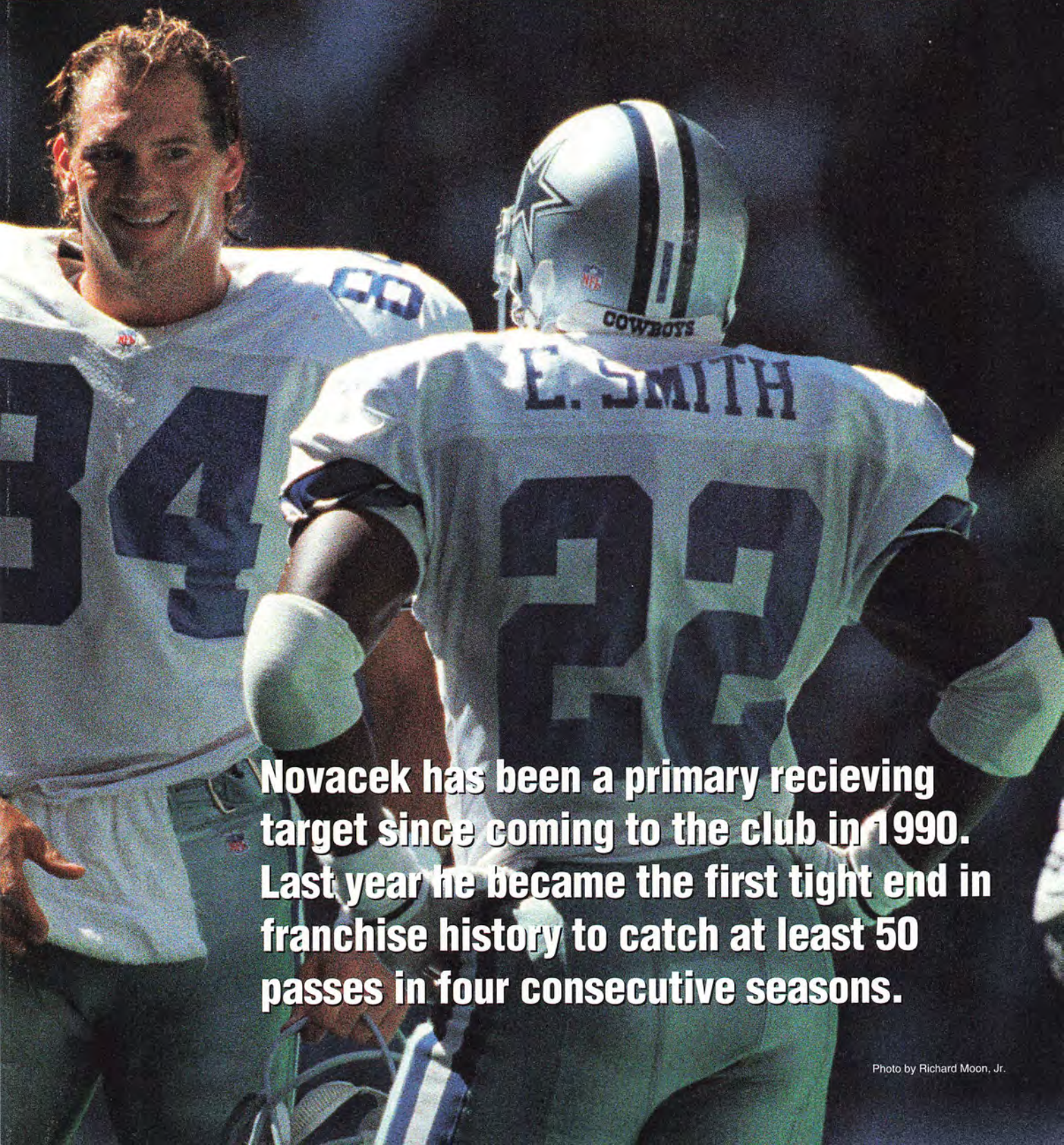
Whether they grew up here or simply called the state home for a few years in college, more than two dozen current National Football League players got their start in Nebraska.

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T H E N F L



Novacek has been a primary receiving target since coming to the club in 1990. Last year he became the first tight end in franchise history to catch at least 50 passes in four consecutive seasons.

And they remember it well.

"I've been thinking about going back all the time," Novacek said in a telephone interview from Irving, Texas, where he plays for the Dallas Cowboys. "Some of my best friends are still back there."

Born in Martin, S.D., Novacek "moved about eight times," spending his high school years in Gothenburg, Neb. He played quarterback at Gothenburg High, where his father, Pat, was the coach.

He said among his cherished memories are the crisp fall mornings spent hunting with his best friend, Chuck Kenton.

"We'd hunt everything," Novacek recalled. "Ducks, pheasants, geese, quail, turkey. We had a bunch of different spots; wherever we thought we'd have the best luck, really."

An All-America selection at Wyoming where in 1984 he averaged 22.5 yards per catch on 33 receptions as a senior, Novacek was a sixth-round draft pick of the St. Louis Cardinals.

He moved with the team to Phoenix, where he caught 81 passes for 1,048 yards and eight touchdowns in three seasons before being signed by Dallas as a free agent in 1990. He's caught more passes than any other tight end in the NFL.

He recalled growing up a fan not of the Huskers but of the Oklahoma Sooners, and hearing about a man named Barry Switzer, the Cowboys' current head coach. "It's quite a treat to be able to play for him now."

Though he owns two Super Bowl championship rings (1992 and 1993), he said his rookie season 11 years ago remains the most personally satisfying. "Making the team," Novacek said. "That's a pretty incredible feeling to beat."

The 33-year-old owns a tract of land just east of North Platte and plans to



Photo by Dave Cross

After nine tumultuous seasons with the New England Patriots, Fryar said he's happy to be finishing out his career with the Dolphins.

retire there someday.

"Ranching; it's what I love to do," he said. "It's what I want to be doing."

Shields was drafted out of Nebraska by the Kansas City Chiefs in 1993, after winning the Outland Trophy as the nation's best interior lineman. He started at right guard the second game of his rookie season — and hasn't broken the string of starts in the nearly 40 games since.

"I try not to think about it," he said. "I just take every game one play at a time."

The greatest difference between college football and the NFL is the intensity of the competition, Shields said. "In the pros, the speed of the game is unbelievable. It really makes it fun."

Though he's only three years into his professional career, Shields has spent time thinking about the future.

"Back in college, we'd play some teams like Pacific, where we'd totally dominate the game, start to finish. That just doesn't happen in the NFL."

**Cory Schlesinger
Detroit Lions**

Among his considerations is continuing his education.

"If I'm still in the league five years from now, that would be great," he said. "That will mean I stayed healthy. After that? Hopefully, I'll have my masters in law or psychology by then.

When your career is over, most athletes always want to try their hand at coaching, so that's another possibility."

Schlesinger said he is adjusting well in his rookie year in the NFL. Last season, he caught two touchdown passes including the game-winner in the Orange Bowl championship game. This season, he plays fullback for the Detroit Lions.

He said his first year as a pro has been "a real eye-opener."

"Back in college," he said, "we'd play some teams like Pacific, where we'd totally dominate the game, start to finish. That just doesn't happen in the NFL. Everybody goes 100 percent all the time, and it's always down to the fourth quarter. It's a completely different ball game."

Wiegert, now with the St. Louis Rams, agreed. "In the NFL, every single person is as good or better than you've ever played against in college," he said. "You don't blow anybody off the line, believe me."

Honored as last year's Outland Trophy winner, Wiegert had earned a starting spot at tackle for the Rams — until he injured his left ankle in the final preseason game. He said he was first kicked, then fallen upon during the

game against San Diego "and I haven't played since."

It's a sour note for a young man who continues to savor his role in Nebraska's performance in Miami last New Year's Day. "I've always considered myself to be a team player," he said. "The national

championship was something I worked for my whole life. It was the ultimate."

Schlesinger, a native of Columbus, Neb., and Wiegert, of Fremont, said they miss the excitement of a game in

Lincoln, and Nebraska fans in particular.

"There's never been any better fans than those in Nebraska," Wiegert said.

"The fact is, no matter what, they're always for you," Schlesinger said. "But here in the NFL, you make a bad play and they'll boo you.

"There's not much booing in Memorial Stadium."

Currently enjoying his third season as a Miami Dolphin wide receiver, Fryar was among the thousands of Nebraska fans cheering on the Huskers at the Orange Bowl. He said it brought to mind his own days before the roaring Nebraska faithful a dozen years ago.

"Nebraska is a big part of the reason I am where I am today," he said. "It was the outstanding coaching at Nebraska that helped me to develop to

NEBRASKA'S TIES TO THE NFL

Players with ties to the Midlands at the start of the 1995 season.

ARIZONA CARDINALS

76 Jerry Drake

JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS

66 Shawn Bouwens

NEW YORK JETS

86 Johnny Mitchell

BUFFALO BILLS

82 Damon Thomas

51 David White

KANSAS CITY CHIEFS

96 Troy Dumas

68 Will Shields

90 Neil Smith

48 Brian Washington

OAKLAND RAIDERS

44 Calvin Jones

39 Bruce Pickens

CAROLINA PANTHERS

82 Don Beebe

94 Travis Hill

PITTSBURGH STEELERS

54 Donta Jones

49 Barron Miles

68 Brenden Stai

DALLAS COWBOYS

84 Jay Novacek

MINNESOTA VIKINGS

51 Broderick Thomas

SAN DIEGO CHARGERS

78 LeAndre Anderson

97 John Parrella

DETROIT LIONS

30 Cory Schlesinger

NEW ORLEANS SAINTS

20 Derek Brown

33 Tyrone Hughes

43 Tyrone Legette

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS

90 Junior Bryant

GREEN BAY PACKERS

68 Joe Sims

ST. LOUIS RAMS

21 John Reece

73 Zach Wiegert

95 Brad Ottis

INDIANAPOLIS COLTS

51 Trev Alberts

NEW YORK GIANTS

51 Mike Croel

Note: List includes players on injured reserve, inactive roster and practice squad.

my full potential.”

While at Nebraska, Fryar teamed up with quarterback Turner Gill (now the Huskers' quarterback coach) for 67 catches, 1,196 yards and 11 touchdowns. Sharing the offensive backfield with Heisman Trophy winner Mike Rozier, Fryar carried the ball 52 times for 615 yards rushing — an average of 11.6 yards per carry.

He was the first player selected in the 1984 NFL draft — the first and only Nebraska player ever to be the overall No. 1 pick.

Fryar began his professional career with the New England Patriots, where he made more headlines for a rocky personal life than for his gridiron performances. Fryar acknowledged his early transgressions and said he has since turned his life around with a strong belief in God.

“I played and lived pretty recklessly before, but I must have had somebody praying for me,” he said. “Now I owe it

The pride of Chadron State College, Don Beebe is making a name for himself at wide receiver with the no-name Panthers.

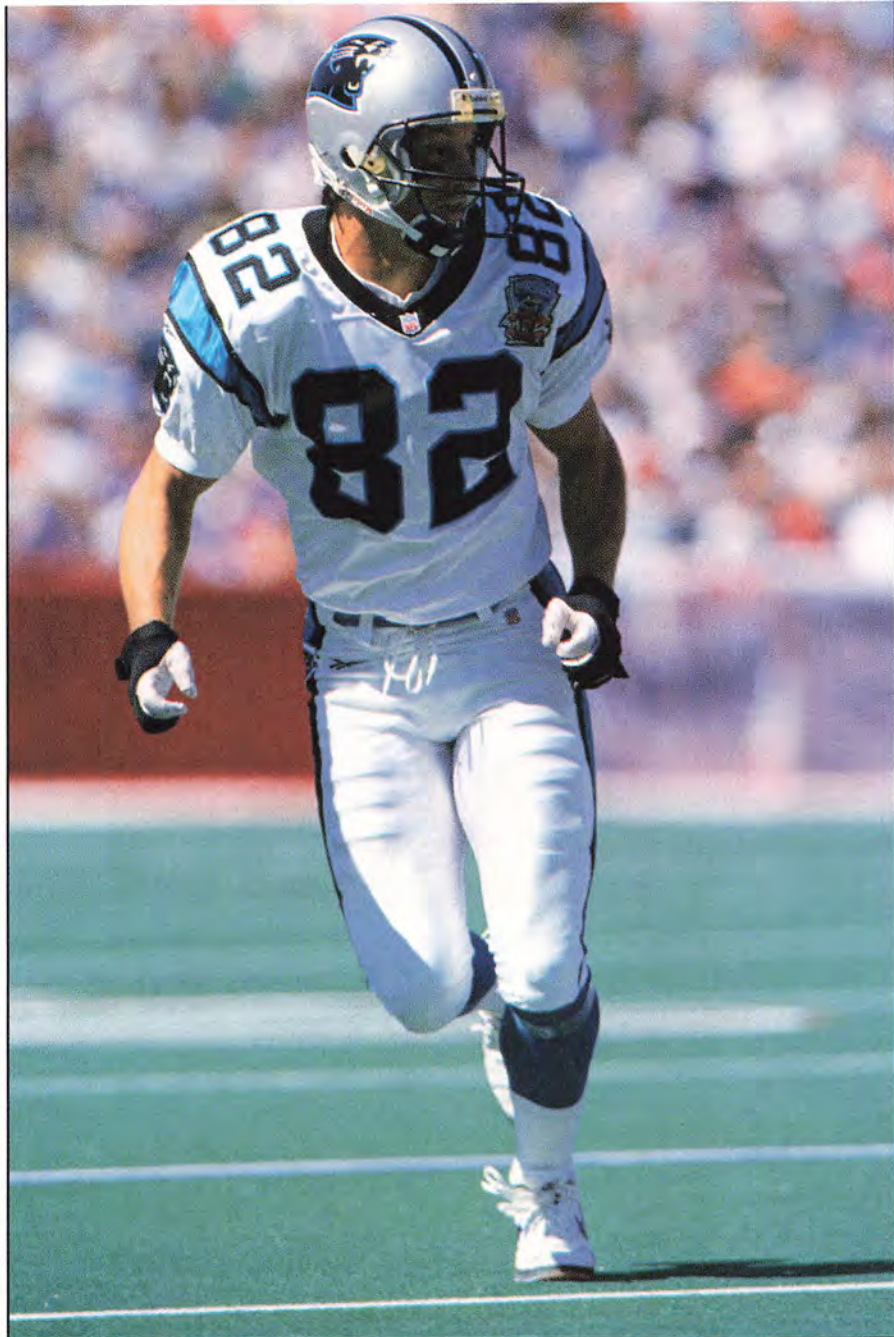


Photo by Scott Cunningham



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all to God and His blessings. He's shared the plan He has for me, and as long as I take care of my body, I'll be able to live out that plan."

Part of that plan is to preach the word. Fryar is licensed as a Baptist minister and a Pentecostal minister — "I like to call myself a Bapti-Costal," he says. He shares his faith with other Dolphins team members on the sidelines and in "team prayer" every Thursday morning. He preaches when the team is on the road. And he even serves, perhaps most surprisingly to those aware of his faults off the field, as a marriage counselor.

"My faith is a huge part of me now," he said. "It's growing inside me every day. It's part of why I'm still in pro football."

When his NFL career is over, Fryar wants to be known for more than the yards he gained horizontally. "I want to be remembered as a guy who climbed the mountain, and made it to the top."

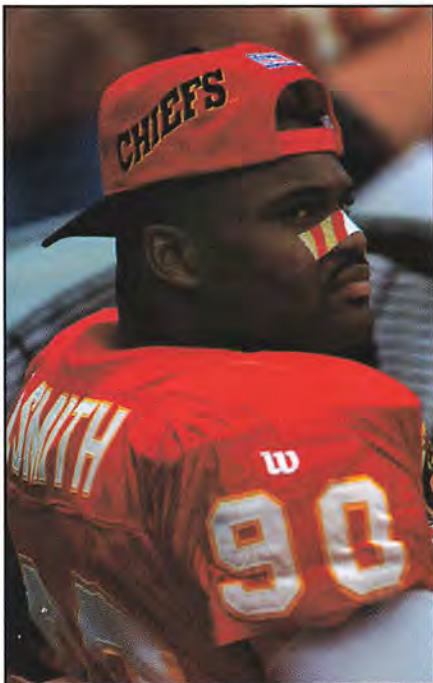


Photo by Eric Francis

The Chiefs' Neil Smith is now a menace to AFC foes.

He said he'll never forget where the journey began.

"Nebraska is my rock; my foundation. You know, I could have gone to a

lot of other schools. But if I had to do it all over again, I'd still pick Nebraska. There's something special about my time there." ■

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ODD MAN OUT

MATT TURMAN'S OUT TO PROVE HE'S NOBODY'S BACKUP

By Sean Weide

Toward the end of Nebraska football games this fall, the announcement of Matt Turman's name and the subsequent roar that bellows from the crowd has come to signify the final countdown to another victory.

But that collective cheer rings hollow in the ears of a native Nebraskan who grew up watching the Huskers play on Saturdays at Memorial Stadium. It's not that Turman doesn't appreciate the applause, (it's "flattering" he said), but he'd feel more at home snapping his chinstrap and trotting out onto the turf for the Huskers' first — not last — offensive series.

"People tell me I'm the second-coming of Gerry Gdowski," Turman said, referring to another in-state player who ultimately got his chance to start during his senior season. "I've probably gotten to play a lot more than he got to play during his first three seasons."

Turman won favor in the hearts of Nebraska fans with his admirable performance in last year's 17-6 win at Kansas State. With Tommie Frazier sidelined with blood clots in his leg and back-up Brook Berringer still recovering from a collapsed lung, it was up to the walk-on from Wahoo to keep the "Going For More in '94" national championship march on track.

But after a regional television audience watched Turman's first start — hand-off right and hand-off left — the stories in the newspapers the next morning focused on the Huskers' limited offensive options with 5-foot-11, 175-pound Turman at the controls.

"So foreseeable was each Lawrence Phillips carry that it might have been announced with a fanfare of trumpets," read

one account.

Memories of that game still leave a bitter taste in Turman's mouth.

"Coach (Turner) Gill told me the first game he played in, he only got to throw the ball something like eight times," Turman said. "I can understand that but I still need a chance."

As if to add insult to injury, one of the few times Turman was allowed to open things up this season, he got himself — and Osborne — in a heap of trouble. It happened in the third game of the season against Arizona State when Turman lofted a picture-

perfect spiral to a streaking Lance Brown — another third-stringer — for a 39-yard touchdown pass. The problem was that Nebraska already led by a whopping six touchdowns and less than a minute remained in the 77-28 blowout.

That touchdown pass — Turman's first of the season and only the third of his career — drew the ire of Sun Devil Coach Bruce Snyder, who wouldn't offer Osborne a post-game handshake at midfield.

"I don't know what goes on over on the Nebraska sideline but if they feel like they have to run it up to compete with Florida State in the ratings then that's a sad statement for college foot-

ball," a disgruntled Snyder growled after the game. Those words and Osborne's subsequent apology after the game — and the following week — drew national attention.

Despite changing the play on the line of scrimmage, Turman said he didn't fall out of favor with Osborne due the incident. In fact, the two are even distantly related — Turman's uncle, George Watson, is married to Nancy Osborne's sister, the former Kit Tederman.



Turman's most extensive playing time through the first seven games of the season came against Pacific, when he carried six times for 12 yards.

Photo by Eric Francis



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Bloodlines aside, Osborne's apparent doubts about Turman's ability have made his junior year an anticlimactic one. Thoughts of transferring — which he nearly did following a redshirt season his freshman year — are out of the question at this point.

"I think Coach Osborne's lack of confidence in me was apparent in the two games I played in quite a bit last year, Oklahoma State and Kansas State," Turman said. "In scrimmages last year, I had the highest completion percentage of any of the quarterbacks and then when I got in those games I only threw about 10 passes."

Last season, Turman completed 50 percent (6 of 12) of his passes and threw for 81 yards and one touchdown. By comparison, Tommie Frazier completed 43 percent (19 of 44) with two interceptions while Brook Berringer was good on 62 percent of his attempts (94 of 151) and threw five interceptions.

Turman knows scrimmages aren't game-type situations and he knows there are other skeptics besides Osborne. If only they could see the highlight film of his senior season at Wahoo Neumann, when he led the Cavaliers to an 11-1 record while throwing for 1,040 yards and rushing for 768 more.

His athletic ability — he also started for the basketball team and ran track — earned him his "Turmanator" nickname during his first three seasons. In fact, he thought about trading his No. 49, which he wore for football during his first three seasons, in for No. 8 so it would read



"Turman 8" on the back of his jersey.

It was his adeptness at running the option that more than once faked out the opposing team, the public address announcer and even the officials. On one occasion in high school, Turman was sprinting alone down the sideline on a naked bootleg for a sure touchdown, only to hear the shrill of an official's whistle behind him. Upon reaching the end zone, he turned to see a pile of players untangling themselves at the 45-yard line and a bewildered crew of officials searching for the ball.

"Dad always said that's a sign of a good option quarterback and good option football," Turman said. "If the refs don't even know where the football is then it's hard for the defense to know."

Turner Gill, himself a master at running the option during his career as a Husker, said one knock against Turman is his size, which has led to a series of injuries, including a bruised shoulder suffered against Missouri last year and an off-season cartilage tear in his knee, which was repaired prior to this season.

"The biggest thing is his strength," Gill said. "He has pretty good quickness and speed but he has to be able to stand in there and take the pounding week after week."

Turman's father, Tim, who has coached football for 24 years, including the last 15 at Neumann, said he instilled in his son at an early age that work ethic and attitude, as much as natural ability, determine playing time.

"In his mind, he's a college quarterback," the older Turman said. "He'd like to play — that's what he's there for. He's working hard to make a shot at it next year. He pre-

Whenever his schedule allows it, Matt drives the 32 miles from Lincoln to Wahoo to help his dad, Tim (left), coach and watch younger brother, Seth, quarterback this year's Neumann team. "Sometimes I try helping him with what plays to run," Matt said.

Photo by Eric Francis

pares hard every week in the hope that he'll get to play. I'm just proud of the way he's handled the whole thing."

The end of the 1995 football season will bring the departure of Frazier and Berringer and leave two other native Nebraskans, Wood River's Scott Frost and Kearney's Monte Christo, and Lake Charles, La., native Frankie London competing with Turman for the top QB job next year.

But unlike the current Frazier-Berringer situation, Turman, Frost and

Christo are buddies. They even teamed up to form an intramural basketball team last spring that eventually lost in the championship finals.

"Next year could be my time," Turman said. "I find myself looking ahead a little bit now and then but I can't do that too much because I could still be in there if somebody goes down this year."

"Even next year, if something happens and I end up second string, I'll still have had a great time. I accomplished a lot more than people thought." ■

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WHEN ALTON MASON talks about the ingredients he needs for a successful senior season at Lincoln Northeast High School, the three-year starter doesn't mention scoring averages or post-season honors.

Instead, he talks about getting good grades, scoring well on his ACT college entrance exam and earning a Division I basketball scholarship.

Rick Collura, Mason's coach at Northeast, said he's confident Mason will meet his goals. "I have no doubt in my mind he's Division I player. And Alton's working hard on his grades."

The other stuff will come, Collura said.

"He's an excellent player in terms of talent and intelligence. He's the most balanced player I've coached."

College recruiters have noticed. Nebraska, Tennessee, Temple and California are among those already interested. All things being equal, Mason said he would prefer to play in the Atlantic Coast Conference. When he does make his college selection, Mason said, the school must be known for its academic standards.

Mason spent the offseason lifting weights and playing basketball — nearly every day. Of course, his studies came first. "No school, no basketball."

Last season, he may have saved his best for last. His 28 points led Northeast to a 79-53 state-championship game win over Millard South. The victory helped erase some of the disappointment from the Rockets' loss to Omaha Creighton Prep in the Class A title game in 1994.

Another return to the state finals, Collura and Mason contend, isn't out of the question. In fact, Collura predicted, it could happen.

"We're decent," he said. "To be honest with you, we could win it."

For that to happen, Collura said, Northeast needs to strengthen its inside

game and improve its depth. Mason's contributions are a given, his coach said.

"Alton doesn't need to be encouraged to step it up. I anticipate he'll average about 25 points a game."

Collura also will look for Mason to continue to set his teammates up for easy baskets. "That shouldn't be a problem for Alton. He averaged about six assists a game last year."

The Northeast coach quickly points out, however, that Mason can't be expected to carry the Rockets. "I don't think you can win Class A with one player. I don't think you can win Class A with five players. You need at least eight to win Class A."

The Rockets' main need is bulk inside. "I'm in search of a rebounder," Collura said. Last season, the Rockets sported a pair of 6-foot-1 forwards — small for Class A. The pair made up for their lack of height by being tenacious under the boards.

Northeast took an early hit when Shane Einspahr, who contributed significantly during district and state tournament play last season, broke both bones in his right leg. Collura hopes Einspahr will return early next year.

Mason said he would like to win another state championships; in fact, he expects to win it. If the Rockets don't repeat, well. . .

"I'll be disappointed, but we'll still have our championship."

— Kevin Warneke

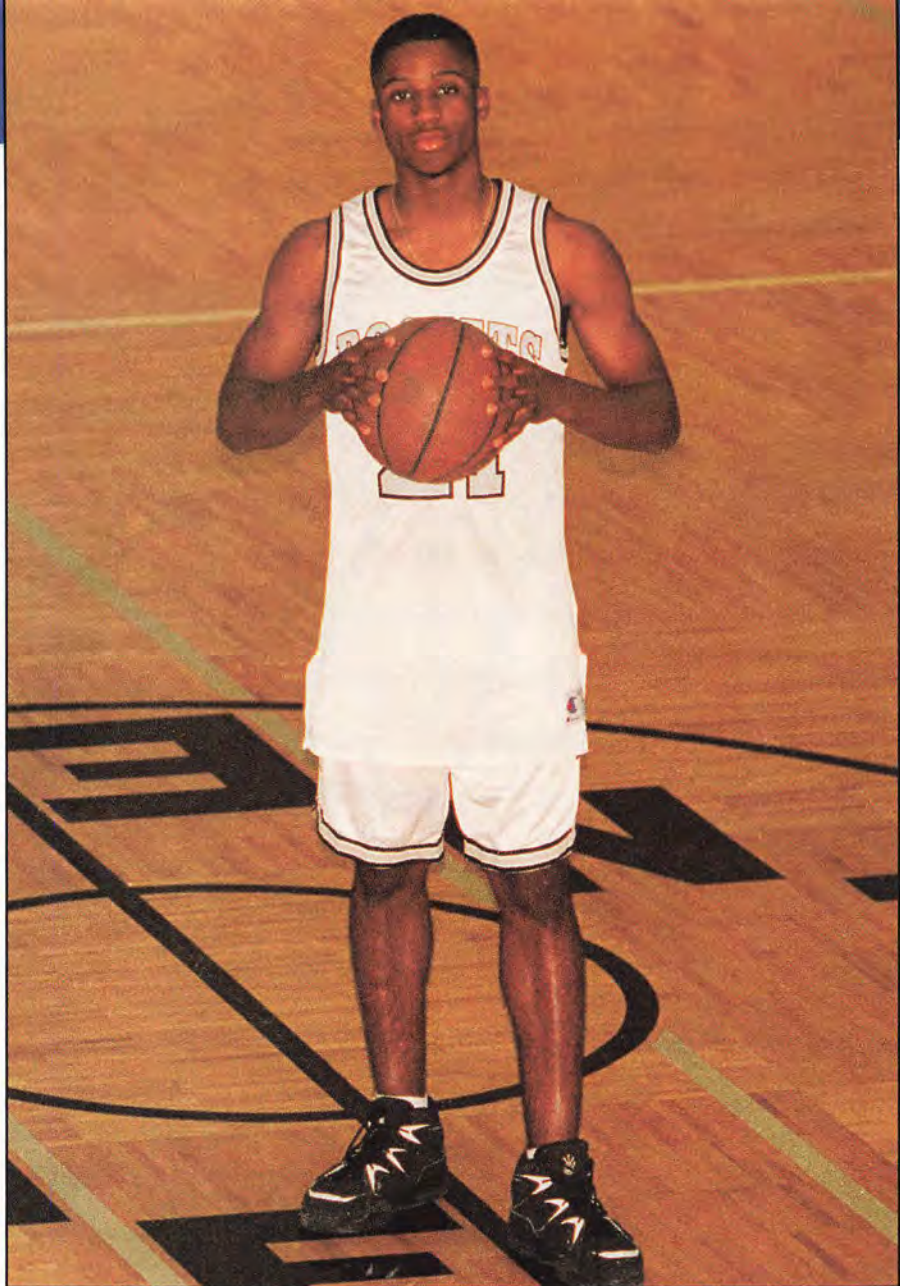


Photo by Bob Berry

ALTON MASON
LINCOLN NORTHEAST HIGH SCHOOL

WHAT WILL NEBRASKA basketball player Erick Strickland be doing a year from now? It's a question that even the talented multi-sport athlete can't answer.

He could return to professional baseball. Strickland played two summers in the Florida Marlins' minor league system before starting a two-year hiatus in 1994 to concentrate on basketball.

Strickland could use his fifth year of college eligibility to play football, a sport he has not competed in since his junior year at Bellevue West High School. He was a two-time all-state wide receiver and would have been a big-time college football recruit had he not chosen basketball.

Another option is the job market like any other college graduate. Strickland, who was named to the Big Eight's all-sports academic honor roll in 1995 with a 3.11 grade point average, expects to receive his degree in sociology in August.

Those, however, are plans B, C and D. The letters Strickland has targeted

for now are NBA.

"I'm focused totally on basketball, it's basketball all the way," Strickland said. "I'm not worried about it because I have a lot of options open to me and a degree to fall back on. But if it takes me to the NBA, I'm there."

Strickland has laid a solid foundation in building toward his dream of playing professional basketball. The 6-foot-3, 215-pound guard averaged 16.3 points and 5.4 rebounds last season and, along with teammate Jaron Boone, has established himself as one of the top guards in the Big Eight.

Strickland's size, speed and tenacity make him a ferocious defensive player. He led the Big Eight a year ago in steals with 89 (2.9 a game).

Strickland's offensive versatility shows in the fact he scored 20 or more points in eight games last season (Nebraska was 7-1 in those contests) and still led the team in assists with 133.

He spent the summer not only priming his game for the coming season, but also putting it on display for

others to evaluate.

Strickland toured France with a National Invitation Tournament all-star team. In seven games, he averaged 7.7 points per game, shot 54 percent from the field (20 of 37) and 4 of 10 from three-point territory. Oklahoma's Ryan Minor, the leading scorer in the Big Eight last year, and Kansas' Raef LaFrentz were among Strickland's teammates.

Strickland also had some high-profile company at an Addidas camp he taught at in New Jersey last July. He trained mornings with college elites like Charles O'Bannon and Toby Bailey of UCLA, Kerry Kittles of Villanova, Mark Hendrickson of Washington State, and Felipe Lopez and Zendon Hamilton of St. John.

Strickland said the Seattle Supersonic coaching staff oversaw the workouts.

Those experiences this summer "tells me there's no doubt I can compete with anyone in the nation," Strickland said. "I showed them I can play solid defense and that I have a team mind-set (on offense). I've learned not to force things and let the game come to me."

Strickland also knows his NBA stock will rise if

Nebraska has a successful season. He saw how Eric Piatkowski become a first-round draft choice two years ago after a late season run by the Huskers garnered them the school's first Big Eight post-season tournament title.

With four starters back, five other lettermen returning and a talented group of newcomers, the ingredients are there for winning games.

"We have the talent and potential to have a great team," Strickland said. "It's about having a winning attitude and work ethic. Last year, we didn't have a lot of depth and we had a lot of guys who felt they didn't have to work hard because they knew they would get playing time."

"But we have depth at every position now, and if you don't work hard, you can't play. And that includes me and Jaron."

— Ron Powell

ERICK STRICKLAND UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN

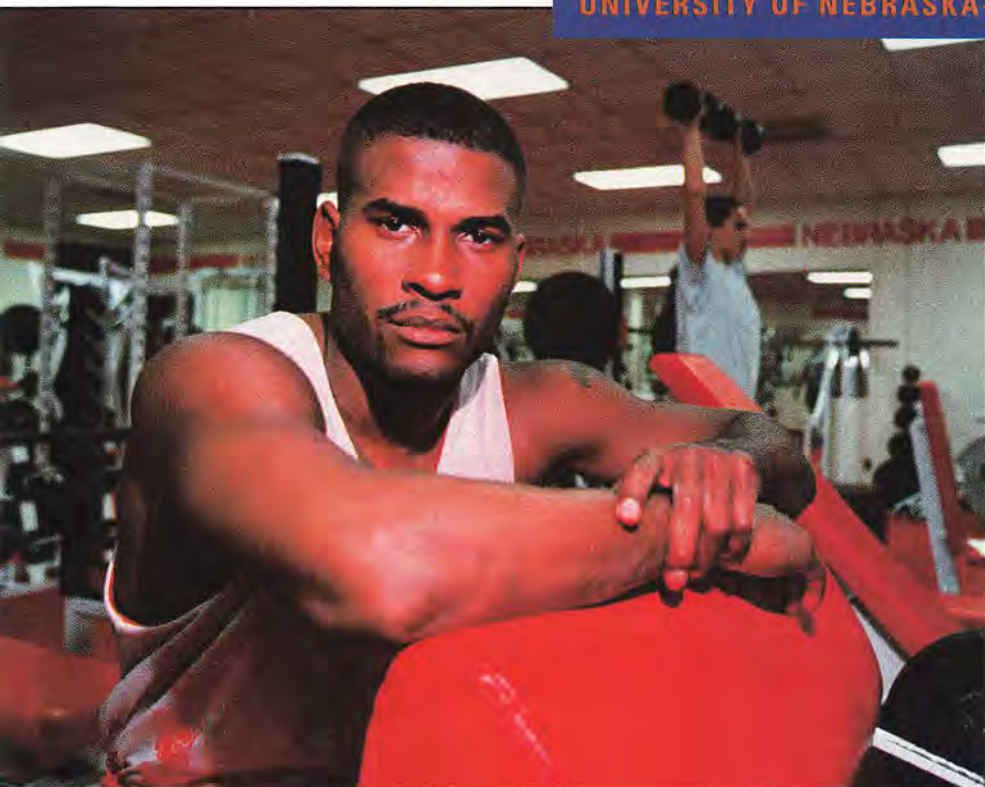


Photo by Bob Berry

1995 BASKETBALL PREVIEW

PARDON JOHN SKOKAN IF he pays a little more attention to his rebounding stats during his senior season at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Skokan, a 6-10 senior center from Omaha Creighton Prep, needs 213 rebounds this season to set UNO's all-time rebounding record.

"I'm aware of my chance to break the record," Skokan said. "I should get it as long as I do my job."

Skokan's job as the Mavericks' big man the past three seasons has been to clog up the middle and pull down missed shots. This year, he'd like to add to that job description.

"I haven't been aggressively looking to score as much as I should. I'm always looking to rebound," Skokan said. "I think I could help the team a lot more if I scored more."

His coach, Kevin Lehman, wouldn't mind if Skokan's scoring average shoots upward. "I look for John to do some major contributing. We're going to spread the ball around, but he's going to get the ball on the block."

For the record, Skokan had 733 rebounds during his first three seasons at UNO. That's 24 rebounds behind Nate McMorris, 42 behind Larry Villnow and 213 behind Phil Cartwright. To top Cartwright, Skokan must average eight rebounds in each of UNO's 27 games this season.

"As a personal accomplishment, 1,000 rebounds would be quite an accomplishment," Lehman said.

What Skokan didn't realize was that by increasing his point production slightly he could become the first

JOHN SKOKAN UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA

Maverick to pull down 1,000 rebounds and score 1,000 points. Dean Thompson — UNO's all-time leading scorer — didn't hit four digits in both categories; neither did Cartwright. With 715 career points, Skokan needs to average just under 11 per game this season — up from his junior-year average of 8.3.



Photo by Eric Francis

As Skokan looks back at his first three years at UNO, he admits that life as a Maverick has had its frustrating moments. He choose to stay at home and play at UNO, although Appalachian State, Montana and Wayne State showed interest. No regrets, he said, but the basketball program needs stability.

Skokan played his first two seasons for long-time coach Bob Hanson. Last season, the Tim Carter era began at UNO with Skokan as his starting center. Carter left after one year, and, with the hiring of Lehman from Northern Iowa, Skokan will be playing for his third coach in three seasons. Lehman's arrival has Skokan optimistic.

"He comes from a good program," Skokan said. "As long as we stick

together, we'll have stability."

Lehman said he isn't so concerned about wins and losses, as he is about seeing his players improve. "We're going to concentrate on the team improving every practice and every game," he said.

Skokan would like to try playing overseas once his Maverick career is finished. Improved offensive skills, he said, are his key to making the leap to the next level.

Basketball aside, Skokan said playing for the Maverick program has been a blessing. "You get a sense of teamwork and competitiveness. That goes with you in the business world and in life."

—Kevin Warneke



Photo by Brad Norton

FOR MOST WOMEN'S COLLEGE basketball players, Division I is the place to be. But for Jennifer Warner, there's no place like home.

That's the main reason the talented 5-foot-9 point guard transferred from Iowa State and will be playing at the University of Nebraska at Kearney this season.

Usually a move down to a Division II school is because of a lack of playing time. Not so with Warner.

She proved to be more than a capable Division I player, starting all 27 games for the Cyclones while becoming the only freshman to ever do so in school history.

Warner was second on the team in scoring at 7.5 points per game and led the team in assists (90) and steals (51).

Warner started the first seven games last season for Iowa State before a blood clot in her right shoulder sidelined her the rest of the season.

"I don't worry about how other people might view this move," Warner said. "I talked it over with a lot of people, and I'm really happy with it. I

wanted to move closer to home and now I'm just an hour away."

Warner was the state high school player of the year in 1993 after averaging 18.5 points a game and leading St. Paul to a 26-0 season and the Class B state championship. She also played on an undefeated state championship team at Greeley (she went to school there two years) her freshman season.

Warner's teams went 91-3 during her high school career, a winning attitude that attracted Iowa State Coach Theresa Becker. Becker first began recruiting Warner as an assistant at Nebraska, which gave her the inside track when she took the Iowa State job in 1992. Becker's resignation in May and return to Nebraska as an assistant finalized Warner's decision to leave.

"I'd been thinking about it before last season ever started," Warner said. "I thought about transferring to Nebraska, but I didn't want to lose a year of eligibility. I could've gone to a junior college and not played at all this year and then still had two years left a Division I school. But I'd sat out almost

my entire sophomore year and I didn't want to do that."

Warner realized her best option was to go to UNK and play for former Iowa State assistant coach Amy Stephens. Stephens, an all-Big Eight guard for the Huskers in the late 1980s, accepted Warner with open arms.

"We're lucky to have her because she's good enough to be Division I," said Stephens, who last season guided UNK to a 17-11 record her first year at the school despite having only seven players on the squad most of the time.

After such a successful high school career, back-to-back 8-19 seasons at ISU was a difficult adjustment, Warner said.

"It makes you a stronger person, that's for sure," she said. "It was something I never got used to and hopefully never will."

— Ron Powell

JENNIFER WARNER
UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT KEARNEY

TAD ACKERMAN IS CONFIDENT that better days are ahead for the Creighton Bluejay basketball team. Unfortunately, those days likely will come after the 6-foot-3 guard's playing days are over.

Don't get Ackerman wrong. He's not giving up on his senior season as the Bluejays' top returning scorer.

"I think we've got the talent. We've got the players who have the ability to win. We have to keep a positive attitude."

Still, Ackerman realizes that second-year coach Dana Altman needs time to rejuvenate a program that had hit bottom. Six players return, but seven are new to the program. "We'll have to break them in quickly."

His commitment to his coach's vision is so strong that the Illinois native followed Altman to a college he knew nothing about.

Ackerman and junior college teammate Mitchell Dunn were intent on playing Big Eight basketball for Altman at Kansas State. A week before Ackerman, then playing for Wabash Valley Junior College in Mt. Carmel, Ill., was to make his recruiting visit to Manhattan, Altman became a Bluejay.

"Kansas State's interest kind of died with Altman," Ackerman said. "I didn't even know who their new coach was."

Instead of visiting Manhattan, Ackerman traveled to Omaha. He liked what he saw. Ackerman noticed that Creighton's campus was clean and he discovered how strong its business program was. He also learned of the Bluejays' rich basketball history.

And there was Altman. "I believe in what he wanted to do."

Altman returned the compliment. "We're really happy to have Tad here. He had a good year last year and we expect much more out of him this year."

"Good" for Ackerman last season meant leading the Bluejays in scoring with a 13.0 scoring average. Altman said most, including himself, expected

center Nate King to dominate inside and lead the team in scoring.

"In his defense, Nate played injured last season," Altman said.

Ackerman said a healthy King banging away inside would have made his outside game much more effective. Too often, opposing defenses were able to play him tightly.

"When the outside shot is your first tool," Altman said, "you're not being as effective as you can. Last year, we asked Tad to do too much."

Still, Ackerman held his own. He set four Bluejay records: most three-point attempts in a season, 210; most three-point goals in a season, 82; most three-point attempts in a game, 13; and most three-point goals in a game, eight.

This season, Ackerman wants to be more than a one-dimensional offensive

player. He said he'll be looking to penetrate and dish off to open teammates. He is also counting on teammates Randall Crutcher, Adam Reid and Joel Templeman to pound away inside and keep defenses away from the perimeter.

As Creighton's leading scorer last season, Altman said, Ackerman won't surprise anyone this season. "They know he can shoot. They'll be looking for him."

Ackerman's chance to finish his collegiate career on a winning team depends on how well Creighton's newcomers progress.

"We're awfully young," Altman said. "We're more athletic. It will be interesting to see how fast they (the new players) come along. We will be more exciting to watch."

— Kevin Warneke

TAD ACKERMAN
CREIGHTON UNIVERSITY

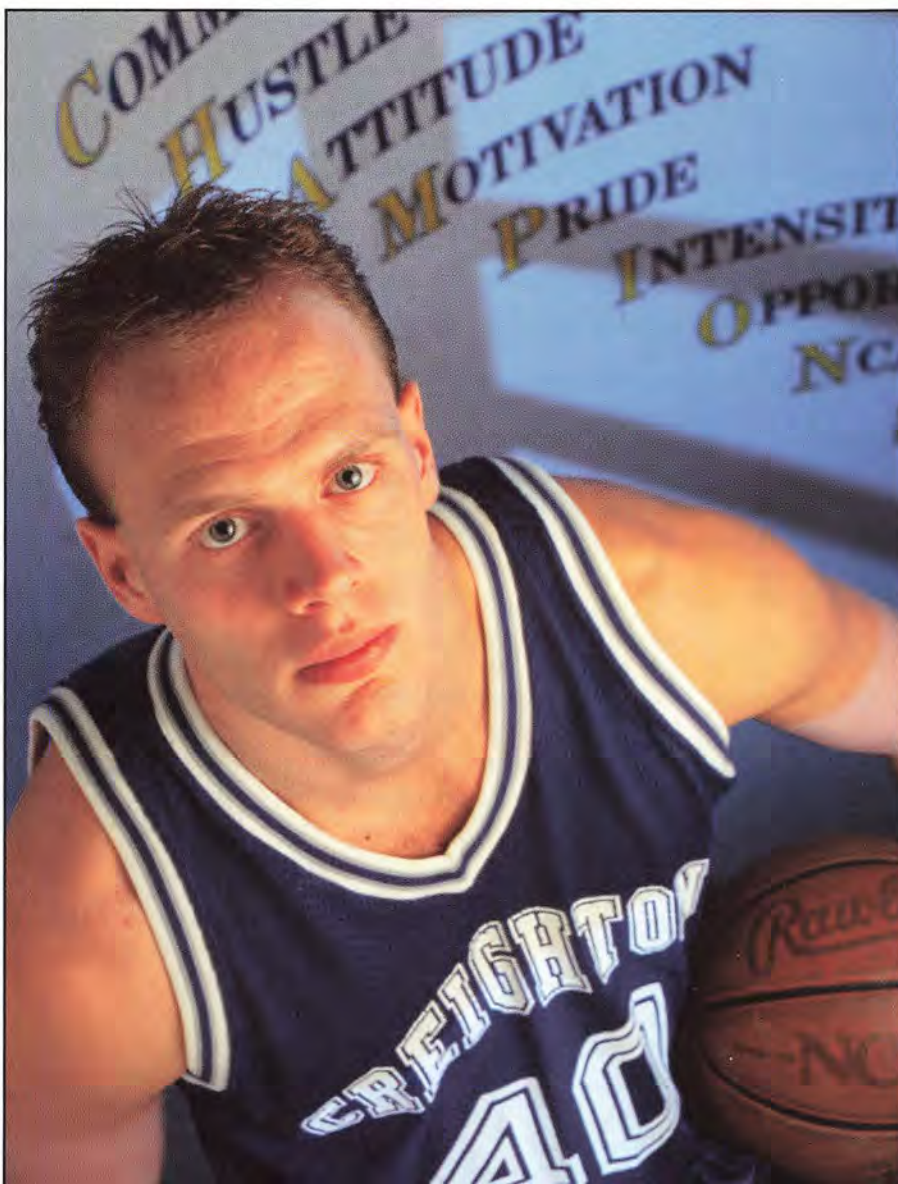


Photo by Eric Francis

PRIOR TO THE OPENING OF THE Omaha Racers' training camp Nov. 2, Bruce Chubick was working in a law office in Omaha.

The former Nebraska basketball standout has a degree in history and said law school and a career in the legal profession is a possibility someday.

Right now, however, Chubick has a different kind of court in mind. His goal is to be working on an NBA court. The 6-foot-7 forward sees his opportunity with the local Continental Basketball Association team as a step in that direction.

"I could be making good money playing overseas right now, but the CBA is the best way to catch on an NBA team," Chubick said. "To me, it's not the money. I just want to say I was there, playing with the best."

It's been two years since Chubick filled the center spot for the Cornhuskers and helped them win the Big Eight post-season tournament. He averaged 11.7 points and 7.3 rebounds a game that season. Chubick increased those numbers to 15.3 points and 12 rebounds in Nebraska's three wins in the Big Eight tournament.

He played in Israel last year, which he called "a mixed experience."

Instead of being cast into a specific role of rebounding and defense as he was at Nebraska, Chubick developed other parts of his game, including perimeter shooting and ball-handling.

He's a much better player than the

one who attended a New York Knicks camp in 1994 "and quite frankly didn't do that well," Chubick said. "I was little apprehensive and I didn't know what I needed to get better.

"I've grown and matured as player," Chubick added. "I feel a lot more confident facing the basket and my defense against smaller, quicker forwards is improving."

The downside was he didn't receive his final two paychecks, which totaled about \$7,000.

"It taught me a lot about life and about who you can trust," he said. "Being from Nebraska and being around people who don't try to take advantage of you, you're naive about those things. That's why I'm glad I'm back here."

The same people who didn't think Chubick could play Division I, Big Eight basketball after coming out of Atkinson West Holt, in northern Nebraska, also are casting doubts about Chubick making it to the NBA.

That just makes Chubick work even harder.

"That's been my dream since I was a little kid," Chubick told the Lincoln Journal Star during the Cornhusker State Games in July. "People who read this probably think I have no chance, but fortunately, they're not the ones who decide. I'll decide when to stop dreaming."

If Chubick makes it to the NBA, it will be because of a tireless work ethic and a strong dedication to the game. That was evident during the State Games weekend. He missed Saturday's semifinal game because he was getting married, but returned Sunday with his new wife, Wendy, in the stands cheering for him.

Chubick also played in an Idelman League game in Omaha later that Sunday.

"I'm lucky Wendy's pretty under-



Photo by Eric Francis

standing," Chubick said. "She knows basketball is a love of mine, and she loves watching."

The 230-pound Chubick is leaner, but more defined in the upper body since his days as a Husker. He credits a body builder in Israel for developing the physique.

Chubick is projected to be a power forward for the Racers, so he'll put that new muscle to good use. He sees himself in a Dennis Rodman role, minus the funky hair, tattoos and outrageous attitude.

"What I want to do is beat up the boards," Chubick said. "If I do that, I'll be valuable to the team and that's how my points will come.

"If you set all the other bull aside, Dennis Rodman is one of the best players there's ever been at what he does. If I rebound and play good defense like that, I might get some looks from an NBA team."

— Ron Powell

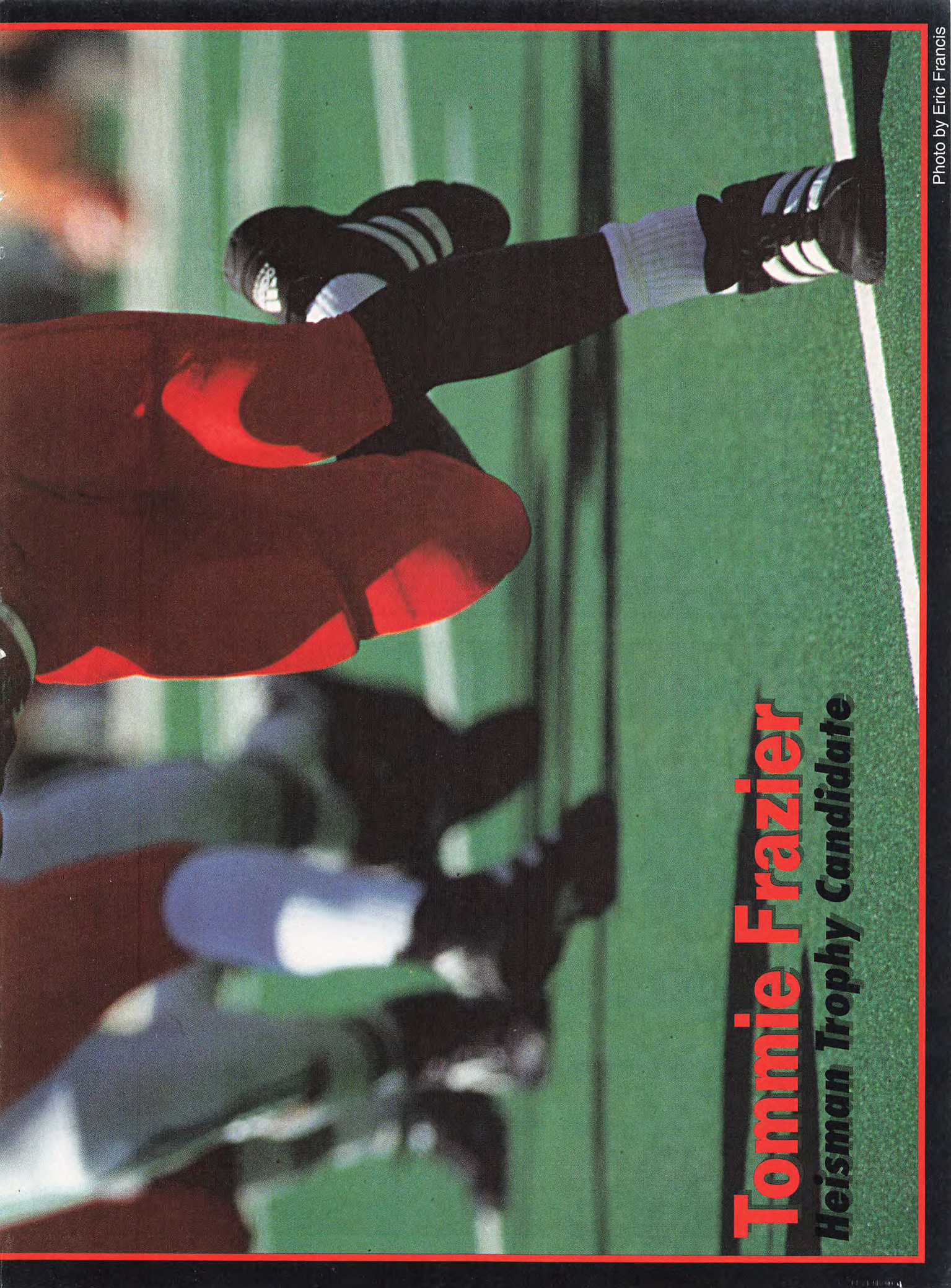
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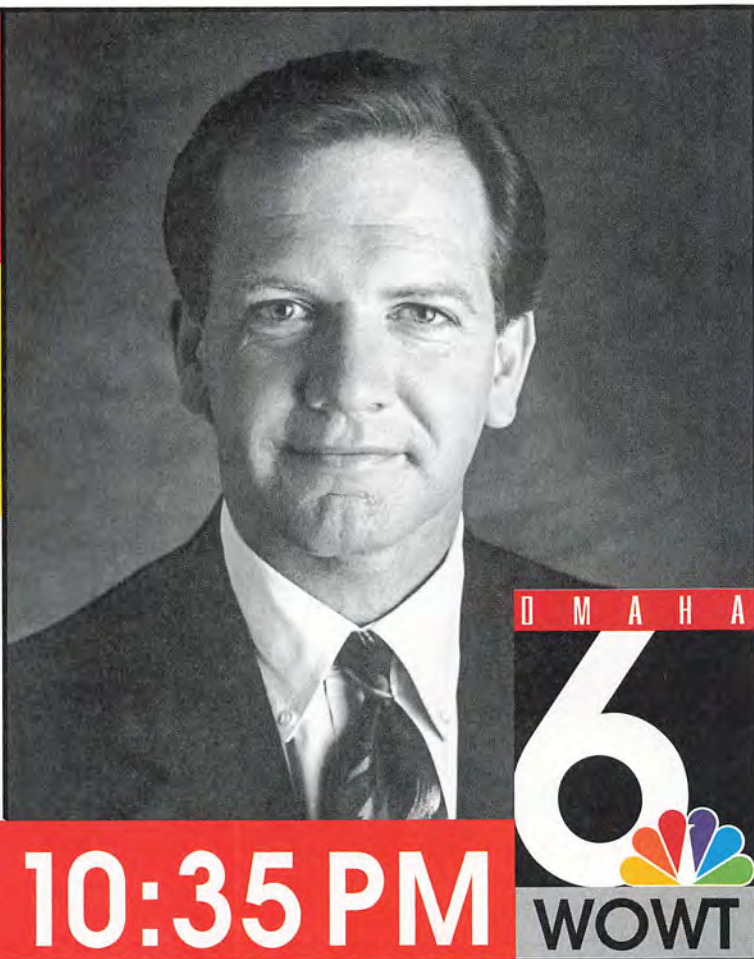
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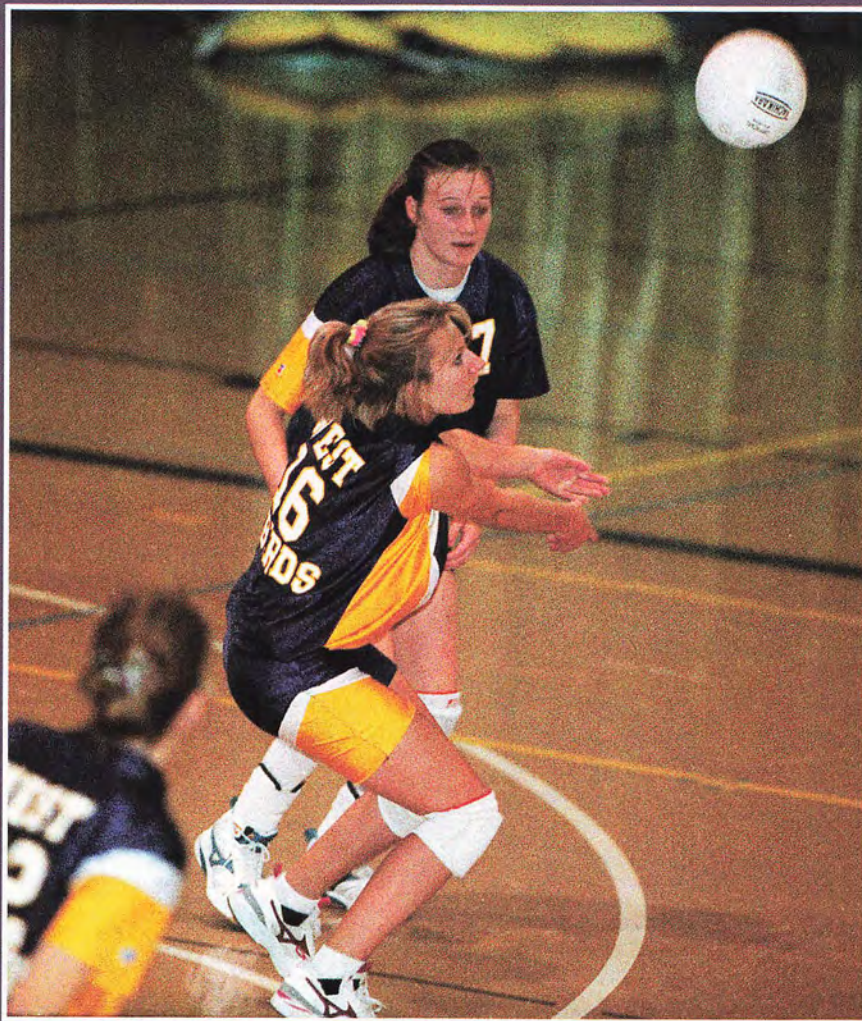
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A VOLLEYBALL DYNASTY

Bellevue West's love for the game breeds success.
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SPECIAL REPORT

When the Bellevue West Thunderbirds are playing their best volleyball, it becomes a sort of joyous, visual jazz — the soft trill of pinpoint serves, the dull bass of passes, the sharp blast of sets and the fierce percussion of kill spikes.

For this year's team, which may well be West's best, there is but one stage left on which to play: the Class A state tour-

nament Nov. 10-11. It is there the Thunderbirds will seek their fourth straight state championship.

But just how do Coach Joanne Kappas' T-birds win year in and year out? And does this team really have the stuff to do it again this year?

How does a program rack up numbers like:

■ five state championships in six years?

By Cory Golden

Photos by Eric Francis

■ a national ranking in the Mizuno Top 25, as high as No. 3 this season, with wins at national tournaments to back it up?

■ a 6-0 match record at state in the past three seasons?

■ A 231-39 mark since 1987 through the start of this season, with no more than four losses in a year since 1989?

If there are rules which the Thunderbirds abide by, Kappas said, they are these: Make it fun, and keep making it better.

"I think it needs to be fun," she said. "And I think there needs to be success in order for it to be fun.

"There should never be a point when you're 'done.' Just like we should get better throughout the season, each team should be better than the last."

Making learning fun and winning a habit have been Kappas' goals since 1980, when she became head coach at Bellevue East. In her first season, the Chieftains went 10-8 and lost in a district final.

"I still regret that," she said. "We should have won." Since then, a Kappas-coached team has not missed a trip to state.

With a 78-38 record in five seasons at East, including a state runner-up finish in 1984, Kappas moved to rival West in 1987. After going 33-16 and losing twice in the first round at state her first two seasons there, Kappas' West team took it all in 1989 and have not failed to advance to the quarterfinals since.

This year's team will snap the record for consecutive state appearances with nine, and a state tournament win this year would tie Class D-2 Shickley and Class A rival Lincoln East for most championships.

It is that tradition, the fun winning brings and Kappas' love of the next challenge that haunts West like a catchy tune that won't go away.

"I like it when other people don't think we're going to be as good, because then it's my job to make sure we are," Kappas said.

Making sure West stays good starts with a year-round United States Volleyball Association club, Sunset West. The club teams reach girls as early as kindergarten, injecting a love for the game that makes even the smallest players want to get better. By sixth grade, Sunset West players look like

Jamie Hamm's mother, Vicki, has earned All-America status in USVBA age-group competition.



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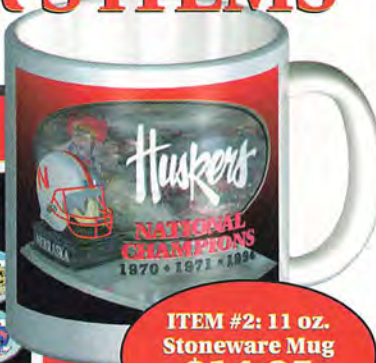
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tiny versions of the real thing.

"I know they take it seriously," Kappas said of the youngsters. "I know they want to have fun at it, but I know they're looking forward to the day they're on varsity. They already have it all — the uniforms, the attitude, the whole schmeer."

Girls from seven to 17 stick together on Sunset West's teams, learning to play together instead of spreading their talents around to other clubs. Kappas said she believes in small teams with defined roles for each player, then finding as much playing time as possible for each girl.

The West staff now numbers eight, including three volunteers, for 50 girls on four teams. Her coaches are committed to the fundamentals, Kappas said.

Each team's system is consistent with the next so that a player can move through the basics at the freshman level, then on to the advanced rotation patterns of the junior varsity, and finally to the varsity where, by then, basics like serve reception can be performed routinely.

That may appear standard, but the success rate is anything but that — J.V. Coach Julie Daugherty-Brown's record is 115-11 in her six years, 22-0 in 1995.

The results of all the instruction include not just piles of trophies and post-season honors, but college careers for 19 Kappas-coached players, 17 from West.

What brings the sound together is the attitude of her players, who, like

musicians in love with their craft, are willing to sweat for Kappas. For all of the coach's nights poring over video and statistics kept by her husband, Tom, it is Kappas' ability to motivate with fun, not red-in-the-face speeches that keeps her players going. Without it, her admitted obsession for details would fall on deaf ears.

"I think we're just more relaxed (than other teams)," senior Megan Porter said. "We go out there and have

fun. The coaches push us, but they don't drill us to death. We just enjoy playing."

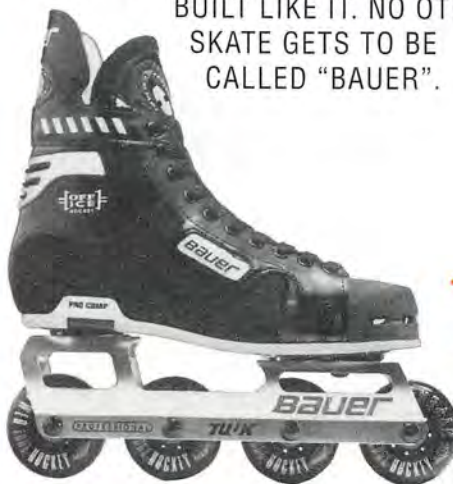
Kappas, 44, claims that over the years her need to be demanding has lessened. There no longer are rules about missing practice, simply because her players are always there.

"I think you know not to miss practice," senior Nikki Henk said. "Nobody knows what will happen. Everyone just sort of knows better."

Daugherty-Brown said she is con-

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stantly amazed by the Thunderbird work ethic.

"If we call a five o'clock in the morning varsity practice, they're there," the assistant coach said. "They don't squabble. There are no dental appointments, they don't leave to go to other things — they want to be there and be part of that tradition."

Enter another part of the West mystique: the notion of peaking at state. It may have started out as a Kappas pep talk or with that first trip to Lincoln, but it is now etched in purple and gold.

"We know that we always peak at the end of the season, no matter what," Porter said. "We rely on that a lot."

With that promise, and the success that feeds it, comes a clear Thunderbird attitude. It is a swagger that means, somehow, these players are as comfortable in a big game as they would be playing at a Labor Day barbecue.

A former volleyball coach himself, West's second-year athletic director, Kevin Rohlf, said that the West attitude struck him right away.

"It was the most laid-back, goofy bunch I'd ever been around," he said. "I thought, 'How can these guys be any good?' But the longer I watched, the more I saw they could turn it on and off when it came to game point."

Midwest Volleyball magazine editor Bill Feldman, who ranks teams for the Mizuno national poll, witnessed West in the championship match of the Nike Challenge in Homestead, Ill., against national power Mother McAuley Sept. 29. West lost 15-4, 15-13, but the team confirmed what he had heard about them.

"There's a tenacity about them," he said. "Call it guts or confidence or cockiness — it's a winning attitude. They got hammered by Mother McAuley in the first game, but came back out expecting to win."

"They have a reputation for being cocky, but, you know, winning ain't about congeniality."

Porter said her teammates know "when we need to get down to business" while still having a good time.

"A lot of teams take it as an insult when we laugh, but that's how we are against everyone," she said. "We don't mean it as an insult, we're just out there having fun."

If there are other trademarks to West volleyball — besides ever-changing uniforms designed by Kappas — they are defense and ball control. Before all the dizzying quick sets, short sets and shoot sets, there is West's frustrating defense.

"Joanne's kids see things and get to the right place at the right time," Feldman said. "That's why balls don't drop on the Bellevue West side of the net."

The compliments West gets are ironic because the team actually spends little time practicing defense.

"It's an attitude that I make them have during the game," Kappas said. "I tell them to be really, really ready. It's the one thing that I will, well, not yell about, but that I will really point out to them during a game. Bad defense is inexcusable."

In fact, Kappas' practices look very much like any other prep practice, with lots of serving, serve-reception and games of four-on-four. If there is anything unusual, it is her team's love of freeze tag and her mixture of tough practices with days off.

The finished production is the fluid volleyball West has performed at state. It is a brand of volleyball few high school teams can lay claim to, Feldman said. Because of how skilled each player is, a Thunderbird volleyball match can actually be an act of creation.

"They're not anchored to one part of a plan of attack," Feldman said. "They use all six players and are more difficult to stop than just about any other team. Even with very good teams, you know what they're going to do."

It's not hard to figure out why Kappas believes this year's team will be her best. This year's starters have size, experience and some great blood lines, as all but one is a sort of second-generation volleyball player:

- Henk, a 5-9 outside hitter, is a four-year starter and the team's primary passer. An All-America candidate, according to Feldman, she is the younger sister of Amanda Henk, who plays for Pittsburg State University, and has played for Kappas since seventh grade.

- Porter, a 5-9 middle hitter, is another four-year starter and the team's defensive stopper. She is the younger

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sister of Natalie Porter, now at Temple University, and has played for Kappas since grade five.

■ Kristine Storey, a 5-11 junior right-side hitter, is in her first year as a

starter. She is the younger sister of University of Arkansas starter Kim Storey.

■ Jamie Boardman, a 5-10 junior middle, is a solid all-around player in

her second season as a starter. Though the family volleyball tradition starts with her, she is the daughter of former West Principal Randy Boardman.

■ Junior Sonda Lima, at 5-4, inherited the team's setter spot this year. Kappas said this younger sister of Midland Lutheran setter Alyssa Lima has voracious work habits and was able to fill in where all-state picks Cheri Pribyl and Stephanie Clerc left off.

■ Jamie Hamm, a 5-10 sophomore outside hitter, is in her second year as West's "Hammer" and kill leader. Her mother is former University of Nebraska at Omaha player Vicki Hamm, who earned age 35 USVBA All-America status.

Kappas said expectations have soared as high as ever for this edition of the Thunderbirds.

Henk, for one, knows that means being careful West doesn't slip the way Lincoln East did in last year's final. West had lost all four meetings to the previously undefeated Spartans before beating them, 16-14, 15-9, in the tournament.

"I haven't lost (at state) since I've been here," Henk said. "I don't know what would happen if we lost this year. It's always in the back of your mind — 'expect the worst, hope for the best.' If it (a championship) doesn't happen, I don't know. I guess I'll have to cry."

For her part, Kappas has always treasured the role of giant killer, whether it was her No. 8 seed East team tripping No. 1 seed Kearney to advance at state in her first state tournament or finally taking down Lincoln East a year ago. This year is different, though, because her team is the hands-down favorite. And yet, Kappas is still relishing her team's final show in the same way, still tinkering with ideas right down to the last performance.

"I like the challenge of putting the best possible team together out of a given group of kids," Kappas said. "Every year, it's a new challenge. If you end up with a team at the end of the season that is the exact same way as it was at the beginning, either you didn't improve it or you made a pretty lucky guess."

"I'm not finished with this team. I still think this is going to be my best team, but it's not there yet."

"Am I still having fun?" she said. "Definitely, oh definitely." ■

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JOSH SIKES

PAPILLION-LAVISTA

PAPILLION-LAVISTA running back Josh Sikes already had name recognition at the school before he stepped onto the playing field.

That's because the 5-foot-10, 180-pounder is the third of four Sikes brothers to play football for the Monarchs under Coach Gene Suhr. Older brothers J.B. and Jeremy preceded Josh, while younger brother, Derek, likely will see varsity action next year.

Suhr said Sikes' importance to the team extends off the field, where he is a role model for students with

scholastic and athletic aspirations.

"He's a true, true champion because he has his priorities straight," Suhr said. "That sets him apart in many, many ways. He is just so mature and a pleasure to coach. That's the way all those Sikes boys were raised."

An academic all-state selection last year, Sikes has narrowed his college choices to South Dakota, South Dakota State, UNO and Wayne State. He scored a 27 on his ACT exam and has run an electronically timed 4.69 in the 40.

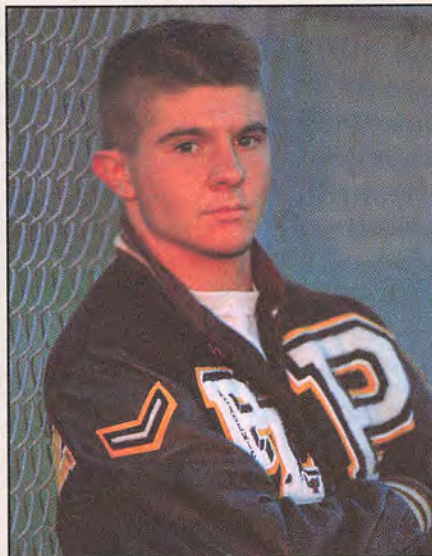


Photo by Eric Francis

A two-year starter for the Monarchs, Sikes missed two games this season after he sprained his ankle in the second game of the year. But he came back strong, rushing for 143 yards on 25 carries in a loss to Millard North in the sixth game of the season.

"Josh is very typical of the type of players we have in our program," Suhr said. "His

strongest aspect is his ability to work to get better. He's not afraid to work hard to reach those goals. He's not afraid to pay the price." **NSM**

Last year, he came close to breaking the school's single-season rushing record, finishing the year with 1,365 yards and 25 touchdowns.

NOLAN URBAN

STROMSBURG

STROMSBURG FOOTBALL coach Dennis Koinzan has coached his share of talented players

during his 20 years at the east-central Nebraska high school.

Among them were Alan

Pogue, who went on to a stellar career quarterbacking Dana College in the mid '80s, and receiver Tim Beebe, who earned All-American honors at Nebraska Wesleyan University.

Linebacker Noland Urban stands next in line to join the handful of Viking players who have gone on to successful collegiate football careers.

The 6-foot-2, 225-pounder has coaches from Florida, Nebraska and Colorado taking notice this season. Through the first seven games of the season, Urban had made 39 unassisted tackles, 99 assisted tackles, 11 sacks and two interceptions.

"That's coming from his linebacker position," Koinzan said, "and we don't blitz that often."

In the Vikings' first game of the season, Urban was responsible for eight points in a 44-15 win over Shelby. He forced a safety, then picked up a fumble and returned it 44 yards for a touchdown.

Urban's athleticism extends to other areas. On the basketball court, he averaged 15 points last year playing forward. And he was the Class B runner-up in the shot put, throwing a season-best 57-feet, 2-inches.

Urban plans to make his college selection during the spring signing period. He made one recruiting visit to Nebraska earlier this fall.

"Noland is probably the hardest worker that I've ever had," Koinzan said. "He is continually in the weight room. This kid gives you 200 percent." **NSM**



Photo by Bob Berry

Little League Football – Too Serious, Too Soon?

DURING OCTOBER, there were more than 250 youth football games played around the state of Nebraska. In Omaha and Lincoln, none of these games drew media coverage of any kind. Not a single mention in the newspaper. No scores were broadcast on the radio and not one TV station was there to shoot the highlights.

It's not that these games weren't significant. They meant a whole lot to the players who spent hours practicing and to the parents who drove their children to practice. But in the long run, what are the benefits of "playing for keeps" at such an early age?

Long ago, pickup games of touch football used to spontaneously form in the backyard during half-time of NFL or college games on Saturday and Sunday afternoons. But those backyard games have moved to the stadium down the street and now involve coaches, officials, chain gangs, scoreboards, flags and whistles. And don't forget practice time: up to two hours a night, two to four days a week, four months out of the year.

Janell Weeks, a therapist who has spent 11 years in private practice, said she counsels about a half-dozen children each week who have experienced trauma

resulting from competition with other young athletes. They experience issues such as frustration, anger, depression and low self-esteem.

"They're not able to be kids because they're taken away from normal activities," Weeks said. "The pressure is really on for the kids to perform. If they can, that's great — the parents just keep pushing them. If they don't, it can be horrible because the kids think they don't measure up."

If the '80s was a decade of complacency, then the '90s is the decade of competitiveness. The messages are all around us. "Be the best you can be." "Only the strongest survive." "Don't settle for second best." In youth sports, it's not enough to be on a team, you have to make a "select" team.

At first glance, you wouldn't know that these games ultimately don't count

for a hill of beans. Players on "select" teams have their own playbooks, which they stash inside their flashy equipment bags that are loaded into the team bus that takes them to their games — even if it's just 15 minutes across town.

Much of the emphasis on winning at such a young age comes from parents. It's part of the belief that they want the best for their kids. For many fathers, it's a chance to relive that one great pass they caught or the winning touchdown they scored in their younger days.

Scott Pullen, who coaches one of these junior high "select" teams, defends the seriousness of competition at the youth level. Without developmental programs, he said, undertalented athletes wouldn't stand a chance of competing for playing time on the high school level.

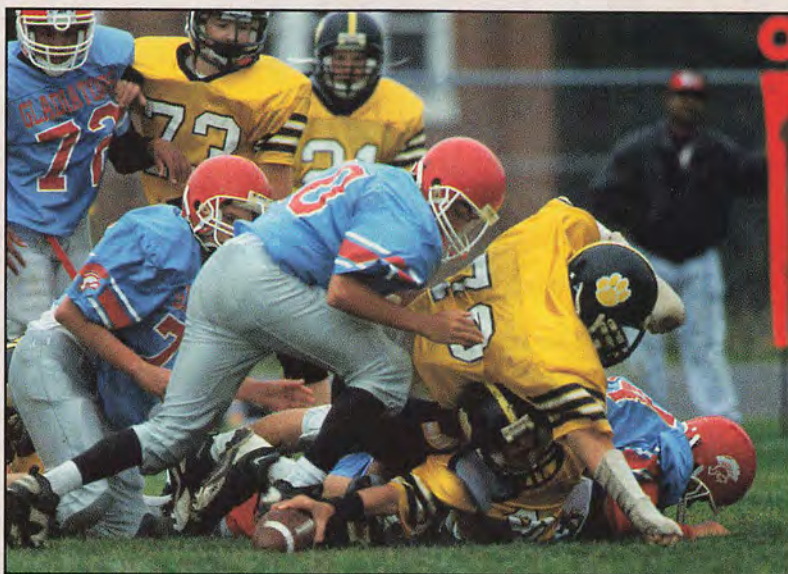


Photo by Eric Francis

Not all coaches demand so much out of their youth participants.

Bob Guy, a fixture in the youth football scene in Omaha since 1972, said his players — whom he refers to as "students" — never practice more than two nights a week. But they continue to win.

"We don't worry about fictitious titles like 'national champions' because there is no such thing," Guy said. "The real joy of coaching is when you

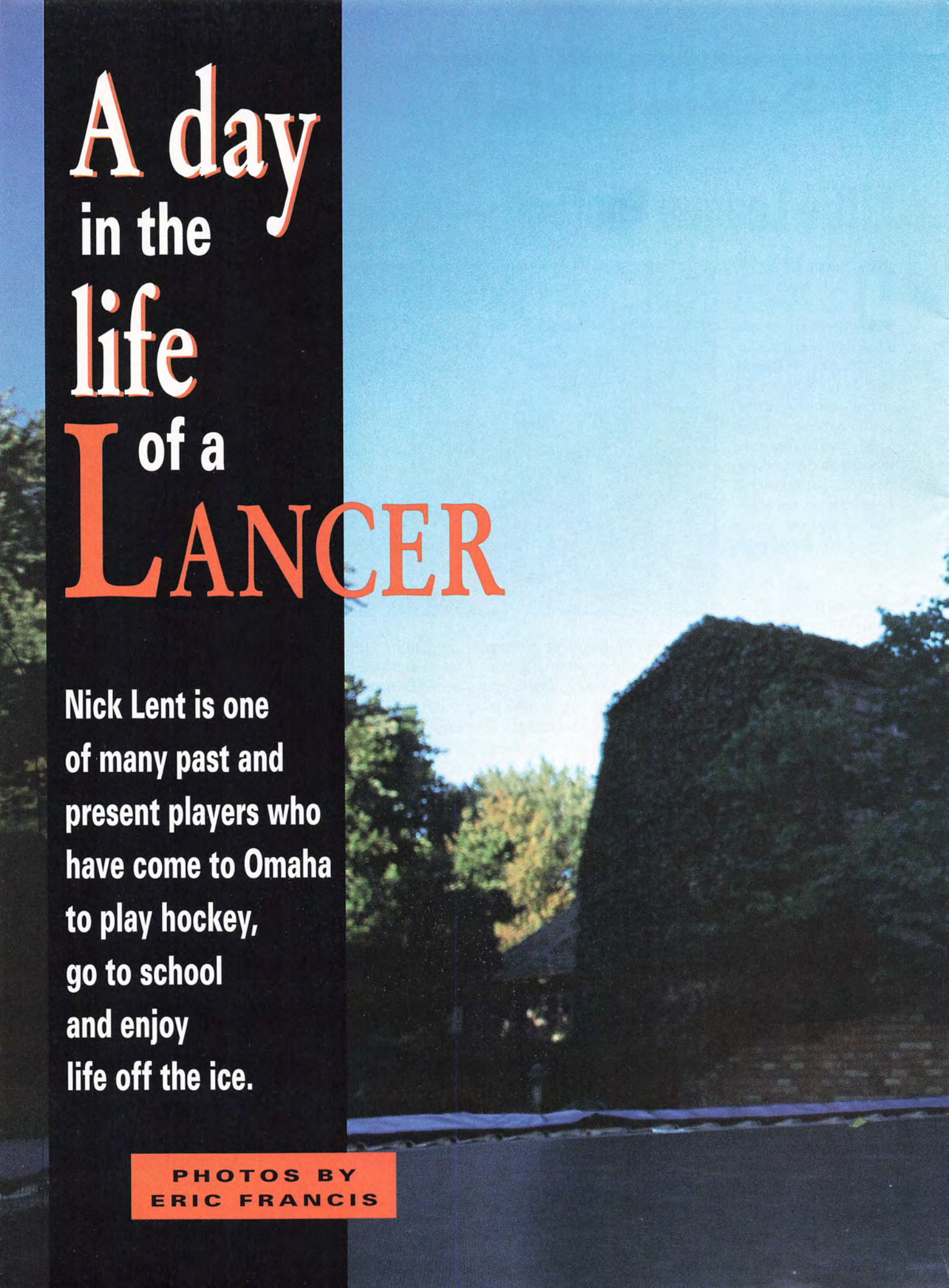
can go to a Friday night or Saturday game in Lincoln where you can see the students that you prepared with the basics."

Over the years, Guy has taken his students to "watch, learn and listen on high school game nights. Some of those former "students" include Damon Benning, Clinton Childs, Jeff Jamrog, Dan Wingard and Jeff Taylor.

"Every coach wants to win," said Guy. "It's the way you accept winning or losing that makes the difference."

So what's next? Televised junior high football games? Pop Warner teams with home pages on the World Wide Web? USA Today's Top 20 Youth Football Ratings?

Each progressive step toward a college football-like atmosphere sets another competitive precedent for an already too serious world of youth sports. 



A day in the life of a LANCER

Nick Lent is one
of many past and
present players who
have come to Omaha
to play hockey,
go to school
and enjoy
life off the ice.

PHOTOS BY
ERIC FRANCIS

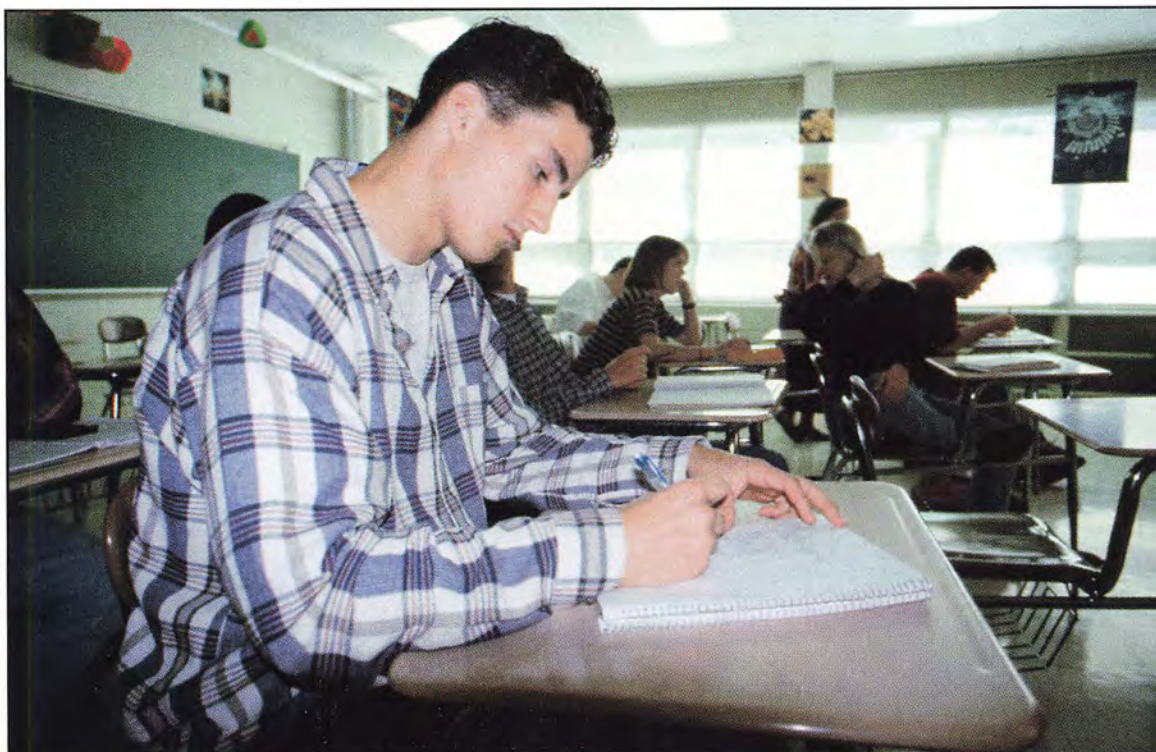


A dual citizen of the United States and Australia, Lent hopes to someday play in the NHL.

SENIOR YEAR COURSES

7:30 A.M.
TO
1:50 P.M.

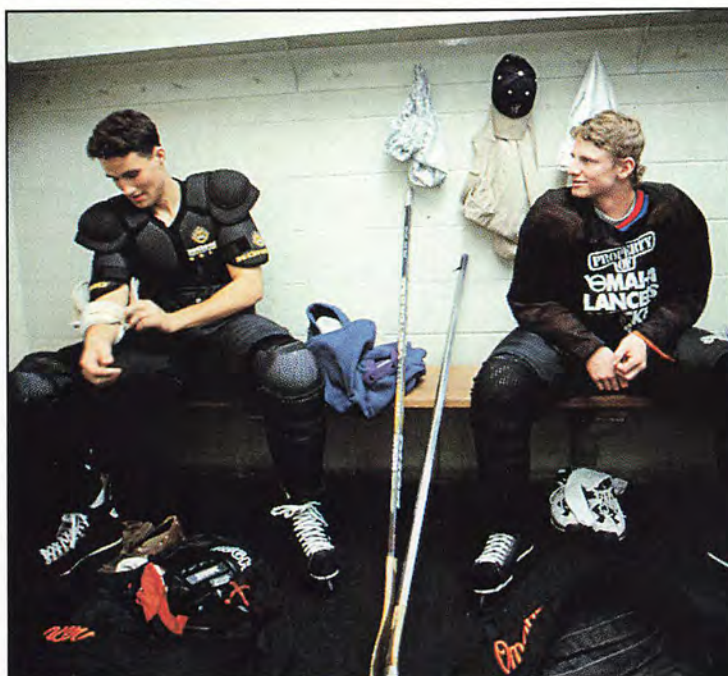
WESTSIDE
HIGH SCHOOL



Lent's senior-year course load includes Lois LeFebvre's algebra/ trigonometry class at 11:20 a.m. (above) Last year, he attended St. Sebastian's High School in Boston.

Six of this year's Lancers are in high school, four at Millard North and two at Westside. Both schools assist players in adjusting their schedules to accommodate extensive practice and travel time during the school year.

Lent often catches a ride to practice at the Hitchcock Ice Arena with one of his former high school teammates, Jake Harney (right).





PRACTICE TIME

**2:30 P.M.
TO
4:30 P.M.**

**HITCHCOCK
ICE
ARENA**

In addition to chalkboard sessions during practice (below), Lancer Coach Mike Hastings gathers his team together for an evening team meeting and film session every two weeks in their Ak-Sar-Ben Coliseum locker room.



A 6-foot-3, 210-pound forward (left), Lent's reputation as a strong skater and aggressive checker has filtered through the USHL. This will be his first and only season for the Lancers, however. In October, he committed to play hockey at Providence College next fall.



Irv and Ann Dana (above) have hosted four other Lancers at their home in the District 66 area: Jerry Keefe, Scott Parmentier, Charlie Lentz and Danny Tompkins. "Our two house rules are no fighting and no injuries," Ann said.

Although he's a transplanted Nebraskan, Lent said he wishes the Lancers' schedule would have allowed him to attend a Nebraska football game this fall.

Lent often joins the Dana's two children, Andy, 13, and Lauren, 10, in spirited games of table tennis in the family's basement (left).



FREE TIME

5 P.M. TO 10 P.M.



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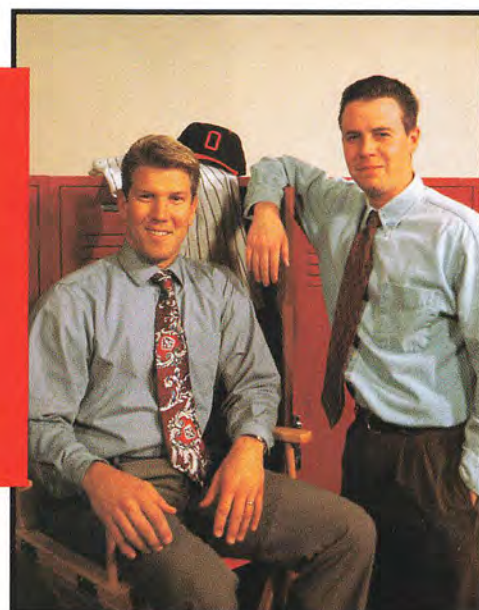
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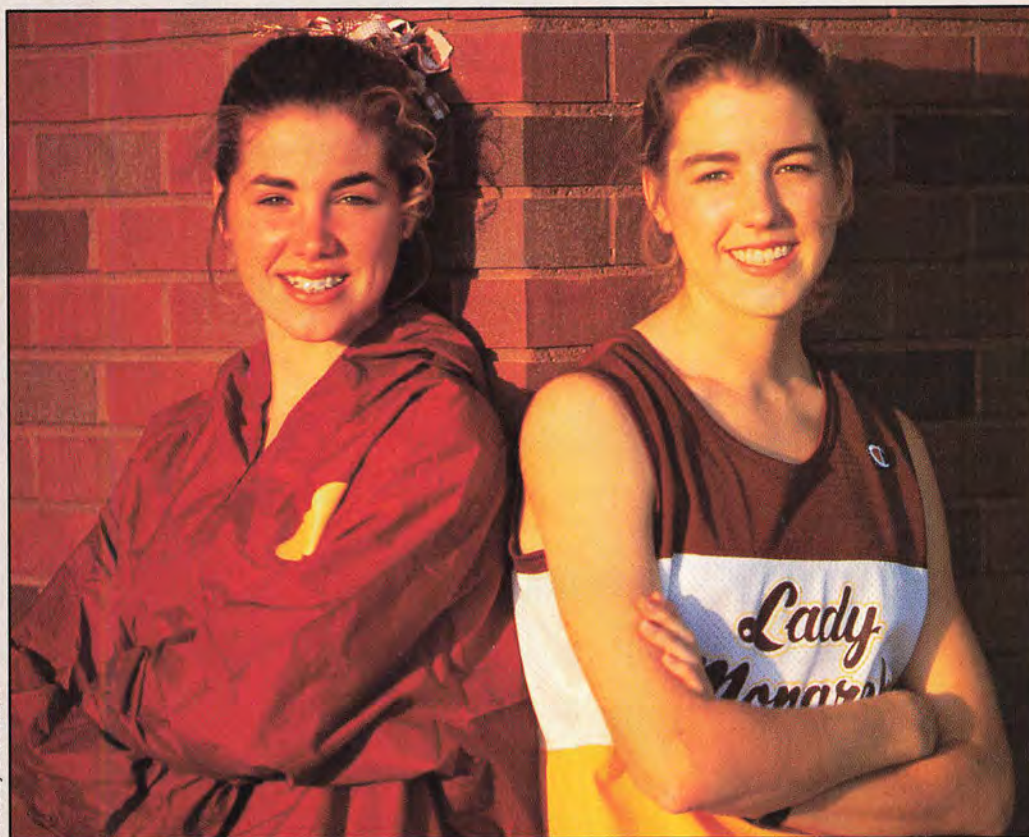


Photo by Eric Francis

Wooley Sisters Make Running A Family Affair

Papillion-LaVista High School is the latest stop on the transcontinental running tour for distance running sisters Alison and Erin Wooley.

The two, who have competed nationally and internationally, started running at an early age when they joined their parents in local fun runs in Junction City, Kan.

"They were five and six years old when they could finally keep up with us," Al Wooley said. "Since they went with us, we started entering them in races from one mile to 5K (3.1 miles)."

The Wooleys already are well on their way to establishing a stellar reputation in the Omaha area. At the Class of the Metro Meet in

October, Alison won the race for sophomores while Erin was tops among the freshmen. At the Metro Conference Championships, both placed in the top 15.

The two immediately turned heads in their first high school varsity competition of the season by finishing in the top five at the Ralston Invitational. Alison was second and Erin was fourth on the Seymour Smith course. Those results brought about third and 10th-place rankings, respectively, in the weekly Class A girls cross country ratings.

"They both have lots of talent and they're both very hard-working girls," said Bob Williams, their high school cross country coach. "When they compete, they're very focused, intense and

business-like. That type of work ethic is leadership by example and I think the other girls on the team notice it."

The past two summers, both girls competed for the Cornhusker Flyers track club, earning berths at the junior national meets in distance events.

As a seventh and eighth grader at LaVista Junior High, Alison never lost a race on the track. As a freshman last year, she was the Monarchs' top cross-country runner.

The two sisters began their formal running careers when they were 10 and 11 years old respectively, working out with the Manhattan Track Club at Kansas State University. They eventually were recruited to compete for

another of the city's prestigious track teams, the Tiger Tigris Track Club.

A move to Germany in 1990 didn't stop to their progress, despite an emphasis on shorter races and field events by their German coaches. Alison became proficient in the high jump while Erin learned to long jump. Both learned to throw the javelin.

"Barring any injuries, I foresee them going on to successful high school running careers," Williams said. "Their experience is a real asset to our entire team."

Dooling, Stelling Capture Corporate Cup Titles

Tim Dooling and Teresa Stelling took home top honors at the annual Corporate Cup run in Omaha Sunday, Sept. 24.

For Dooling, 36, it was the sixth time he had crossed the finish line first in the event and his fourth consecutive win overall. His victory margin was 45 seconds overall.

Stelling, a former distance running standout for the University of Nebraska and now a teacher in the Westside Community Schools, clocked a time of 35:12 on the 10-kilometer course, nearly three minutes faster than the winning time of a year ago.

Over 17,000 runners were registered for the race, which snaked its way through downtown Omaha streets, but a steady drizzle and cool temperatures led to about 5,000 no-shows. **NSM**

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UNITED SPORTS EFFORT IN FREMONT US A

COACHES OFTEN PREACH teamwork and chemistry as the keys to success.

In Fremont, the two high schools — Fremont High and Fremont Bergan — blend well with the local college — Midland Lutheran

— support the city's reputation as a sports-minded community.

"Sometimes when there are two or three schools in a community, they kind of fight for support," said Gerry Gdowski Sr., athletic direc-

tor at Fremont High. "One nice thing about this community is that it is very supportive of all three schools, and all three schools work very well together. The city is very cooperative in helping all three schools. We really have a good working relationship within the community."

Competing in the Heartland Conference against the four Lincoln schools and Grand Island, Fremont High teams have to compete against schools significantly larger than theirs.

"We're a lot smaller than the other schools,"

Gdowski said. "We're a little over half the size of some of the schools we're competing with. In fact, we're less than half the size of Southeast and Lincoln High. I think we need that kind of support and following from our community. It helps our kids rise to the occasion and be ready to compete."

The Tigers have proven they can compete with anyone in the state, especially on the track. Fremont has claimed state titles in boys track five times: 1981, 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1990.

"I think our reputation is in track because of the state championships we've won," Gdowski said. "I think we've also been very competitive in football and basketball."

Jon Appleget, track



Photo by Eric Francis

The newly renovated Fremont YMCA now features two swimming pools and a whirlpool. In addition to swimming lessons, the center offers group and individual lessons in tennis, karate and racquetball.



A new, five-court tennis complex has been a strong drawing card for the YMCA's membership, which numbers just over 7,000.

Photo by Eric Francis

coach at Fremont for 31 years, is responsible for building that tradition.

"Just like any tradition, it's an attractive force," Appleget said. "That's one of the paybacks for developing a winning program."

The Fremont track team has placed in the top three at 156 of its last 165 meets.

"They just know we're going to be in the top three," Appleget said.

Appleget said there are three elements to Fremont's track success: time, enthusiasm and numbers. The coaching staff and the Fremont athletes bring all three together.

Team members who may not have had much success as freshmen, sophomores

and juniors often step up as seniors after sticking it out the first three years, Appleget said.

Athletes such as Gerry Gdowski Jr., Chip Bahe, Steve Sindelar and Matt Meyer helped establish the Fremont tradition. Appleget has some athletes who will be looking to uphold and expand that tradition this spring, including pole vaulters Mike Lewis and Nick Ranslem, weight men Ryan Dodge and Zac Yount, distance runners Tim Ebers and Chris Groud, and sprinter Scott Leedom.

The elder Gdowski, who has served as Fremont's athletic director for 17 years, has had a hand in the development of some of the city's

top athletes. There are some he may have helped a little more.

Jenny Gdowski, his daughter, participated in cross country, volleyball and basketball at Fremont, while daughter Linda set several North Central Conference track records and won a Drake Relays 400-meter title during her collegiate career at the University of South Dakota. Fourth-grader Mark is helping continue the tradition, qualifying for AAU Nationals in the 800- and 1,600-meter run.

Gerry Gdowski Jr. helped lead the Tigers to three consecutive football conference titles in the mid-1980s and quarterbacked the Nebraska Cornhuskers in

It's just unbelievable that a Class C-2 school would have two young people playing in the pros on Sundays. We're very happy for them and extremely proud."

- Joe Vojtech
Fremont Bergan
Principal



Photo by Eric Francis

1989.

"I was real proud of him," he said of his son. "I was proud of the fact that he kept in the back of his mind that he was going to take advantage of his opportunity to play. He worked hard in those summers to get ready to play, especially the summer before his senior

year."

Gerry Gdowski Jr. had to work his way up the depth chart, waiting for his turn while other quarterbacks such as Steve Taylor and Mickey Joseph led the Husker offense through its paces.

But his time finally came. In 1989, the younger

Gdowski was one of the team's co-captains and earned All-Big Eight and Academic All-Big Eight honors.

"When Chip and Gerry played at Nebraska, one of the things that I really felt good about was the leadership they were able to provide the team while they

Jon Appleget has trained some of the state's best runners since his arrival at Fremont High in 1964.

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Thur.	Dec. 14	Sioux Falls	6:30
Sat.	Dec. 23	Yakima	7:30
Mon.	Dec. 25	Yakima	6:30
Wed.	Dec. 27	San Diego	6:30
Fri.	Dec. 29	Oklahoma City	7:30
Sun.	Dec. 31	Florida	9:00
Sun.	Jan. 7	Florida	6:30
Fri.	Jan. 12	Connecticut	7:30
Sat.	Jan. 13	Shreveport	7:30
Sun.	Jan. 21	Quad City	6:30
Sat.	Jan. 27	Shreveport	7:30
Wed.	Jan. 31	Yakima	6:30
Thur.	Feb. 15	San Diego	6:30
Sun.	Feb. 18	Sioux Falls	6:30
Tue.	Feb. 20	Sioux Falls	6:30
Fri.	Feb. 23	Shreveport	7:30
Fri.	Mar. 1	Oklahoma City	7:30
Sat.	Mar. 2	Fort Wayne	7:30
Thur.	Mar. 7	Florida	6:30
Sun.	Mar. 10	Yakima	6:30
Wed.	Mar. 13	Shreveport	6:30
Fri.	Mar. 15	Grand Rapids	7:30
Sun.	Mar. 17	Oklahoma City	6:30
Fri.	Mar. 22	Rockford	7:30
Sat.	Mar. 23	Chicago	7:30

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played," the elder Gdowski said. "I think it left a positive image on our community."

Fremont Bergan also has supplied the Husker football team with a pair of well-regarded players in brothers Erik and Zach Weigert. Zach Weigert, who was selected in the 1995 NFL draft, joined former Bergan teammate Brad Ottis with the St. Louis Rams. Ottis played at Wayne State and was drafted by the Rams a year ago.

"It's just unbelievable that a Class C-2 school would have two young people playing in the pros on Sundays," said Joe Wojtech, principal at Bergan. "We're very happy for them and extremely proud."

Wojtech was Bergan's coach when Ottis and Zach Weigert were seniors.

Ottis, a defensive lineman, and Weigert, an offensive tackle, will be going head-to-head in practice once again — something that motivated them in high school, Wojtech said.

"Brad was much smaller pound-wise," Wojtech

recalled. "Brad would get in that weight room and start doing something, and Zach didn't want to be outdone. They motivated each other all the way through.

"Brad came here the spring of his sophomore year. He just started working really hard. He was just ideal. Zach, on the other hand, was a kid. He liked to

be a little rambunctious. He would test you a little bit more."

Both players were selected to the Shrine Bowl that year, and both were dominant at their respective positions in the game.

Wojtech watched the recent NFL draft at his daughter's home in Kansas City, Mo.

"We were just getting disappointed over Kansas City not taking (Weigert) and I said, 'Maybe the Rams will take him and we can go watch them both,'" he said. "They announced it and I couldn't believe it. It was great."

An accomplishment for both the players and the city of Fremont. **NSM**



Photo by Eric Francis

Hopkins Arena, on the campus of Midland Lutheran College, has hosted several community athletic functions, in addition to being the home of the Warriors' volleyball, basketball and indoor track teams.



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The Glory Days

Four Husker standouts talk about the '71 team that stands out as Nebraska's best

THE 1971 NEBRASKA Cornhuskers. This is where most writers stop and proclaim that the '71 football Huskers were "arguably" the best team of all time.

Not everyone. The 1971 unit WAS and IS the best team that has ever walked on the gridiron.

What about the 1945 Army team? Not a chance.

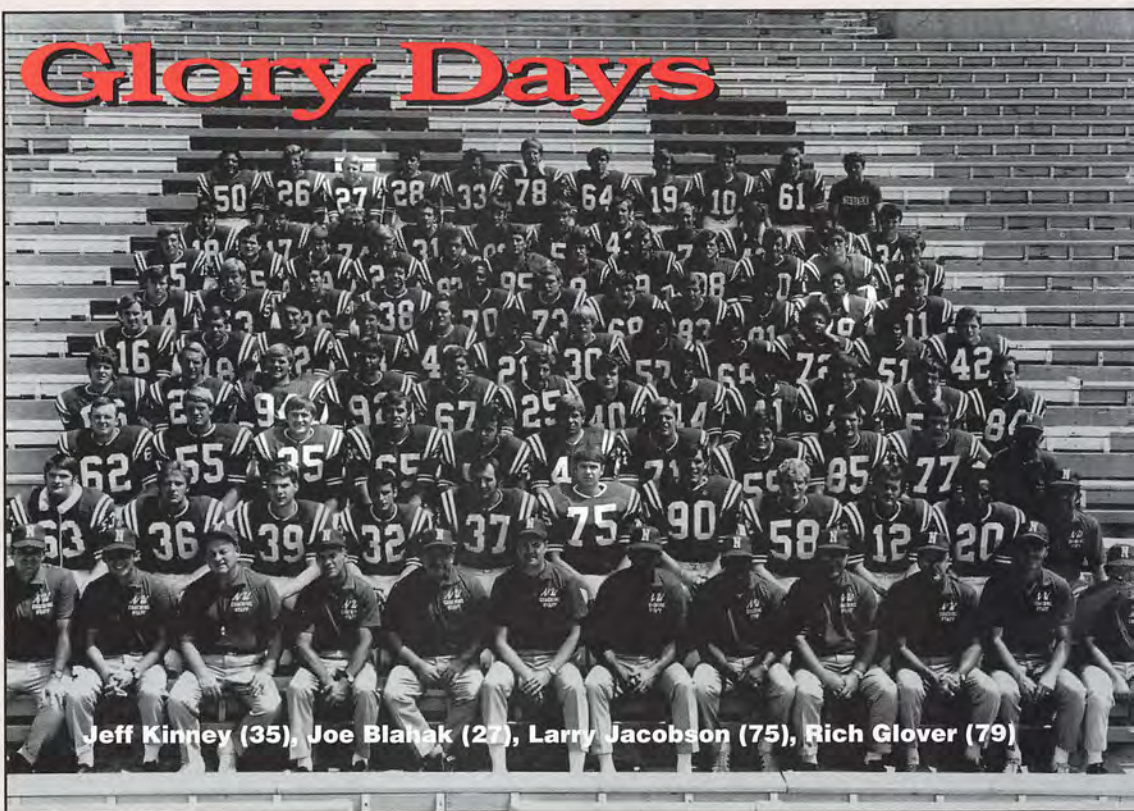
How about one of Bud Wilkinson's teams at Oklahoma? Sorry.

1966 Notre Dame or 1966 Michigan State? No way.

Quite possibly the greatest coach who ever lived, the late Paul 'Bear' Bryant, explained in so many words how good that Nebraska team was after the Huskers humiliated his second-ranked Alabama Crimson Tide on New Year's Night in 1972.

"I surely think they are one of the greatest, if not the greatest team, I've ever seen," Bryant said after his team's 38-6 loss. "They just toyed with us."

Alabama was simply the icing on an already baked cake. Nebraska capped off its



Jeff Kinney (35), Joe Blahak (27), Larry Jacobson (75), Rich Glover (79)

Photo courtesy of the Nebraska Sports Information Office.

regular season with a vacation hula dance over Hawaii, after rallying to edge Oklahoma 35-31 in the "Game of the Century" on the previous Thanksgiving Day. Those two games came after a season that saw the Huskers spear nine straight opponents by an average score of 39-6.

Fans remember the season for those reasons. That season put Nebraska on the map, and it's been there ever since.

For the players, however, it wasn't about making legends — it was simply about fun. The legendary status just seemed to take on a life of its own.

For Jeff Kinney, it all seems like it went so fast.

"Your talking about life in general, it's all a blur," Kinney said. "Life goes by so quickly and you have to enjoy it for what it is. I guess that I

was really one of those people that was at the right place, at the right time. But glory is a fleeting thing. There are more important things in life than fame."

Kinney, an All-American I-back in 1971, rushed for 1,037 yards that year, including 174 yards and four touchdowns against Oklahoma.

Sports Illustrated's Dan Jenkins wrote of Kinney's exploits in that game, which turned Kinney into one of those Nebraska legends.

Jenkins called Kinney a "Refrigerator Truck" that helped lead a Nebraska offense that kept coming like "the disciplined Prussians they have become under Bob Devaney."

Where Notre Dame's Four Horsemen once rode together in dramatic lore, Kinney's

glory was as a Lone Rider. He wreaked havoc on any poor soul foolish enough to try and stop him.

While his glory surely lives on in football fans' dreams, his personal satisfaction has come from his family.

A McCook, Neb., native, Kinney lives with his wife, the former Becky Anderson, also a native of McCook, in Wheaton, Ill. Kinney was drafted by the Kansas City Chiefs in 1972 and played in the National Football League for several years before returning to Nebraska. He worked in the insurance industry until 1984, and then began a successful assistant coaching stint under Jerry Pettibone at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb. Kinney left coaching and joined an investment company in Wheaton called First Albany in 1986. He has been with the

JEFF KINNEY

company ever since.

"I left coaching because I felt like it was more important to me to be there for my kids during their playing careers," Kinney said. "My career in football is definitely something I look back on and that I am proud of. But I get so much more pleasure watching my kids be successful."

Kinney's oldest son, Jeff, a former quarterback at the University of Illinois, graduated in 1991. Another son, Mike, played football for Bill Curry at the University of Kentucky, and for Earl Bruce at Colorado State before suffering from an arthritic hip injury. Mike finished his playing career at Wheaton College and earned his degree.

Kinney's daughter, Kristin, a standout high school basketball player, currently is a sophomore at Bethel College in Illinois.

The Kinney family makes the trek back to Nebraska several times a year, and even traveled to the 1995 Orange Bowl to witness Nebraska's 24-17 win over Miami.

"All of my kids are big Nebraska fans," Kinney said. "I consider Tom (Nebraska coach Tom Osborne) a good friend. We got to see everybody down there. It was a great experience and everybody was so happy."



Joe Blahak doesn't have to look far to get a vivid picture of his playing days at the University of Nebraska.

All he has to do glance down from the stands at Memorial Stadium, find No. 17, and that is enough to bring back the feeling.

Blahak's son, Chad, a 5-foot-9, 190 pound junior cornerback, is on the 1995 Nebraska roster.

"With Chad's career, I've

always tried to be very careful," Blahak said. "He's never tried to follow in my footsteps, and obviously, people are going to try and make the comparisons.

"But I've always tried to be careful about telling him 'I did this or I did that' kind of stuff," he said. "We've been supportive, but none of us needs to be that close to it. Who knows, when Chad graduates, I may not feel the need to go to any more games."

Some 24 years earlier, that type of thinking never would have entered Blahak's mind.

Blahak, an All-Big Eight left cornerback and a three-year starter from the '71 team, is now an insurance representative with UNICO in Lincoln. The Columbus, Neb., native said the game of football helped him make lifelong friends, created

opportunities for him financially and gave him a sense of

pride.

The one person it didn't influence, however, was his wife, Diane.

"She never really cared much about what we were doing on the football field," Blahak said. "Billy Kush (also a former defensive back) and his wife, and Diane and I hung around together all the time. They couldn't care less if we were playing Oklahoma."

So while the college football world lavished endless praise on players such as Blahak, his relationship with Diane helped him cope with life after the Huskers.

"There have been guys there that just can't let go of the glory days," Blahak said. "It's a tough thing to do. Some people don't have any way to move away when it is time to stop making tackles and move on to something else."

Blahak graduated with a teaching degree and was

drafted by the Houston Oilers in the eighth round of the 1972 NFL draft. He spent four years bouncing around the league, and two formidable years learning from quarterback Fran Tarkenton and the Minnesota Vikings.

"Fran kind of took me under his wing and showed me the ropes," Blahak said. "He was one of the most gracious men I've ever known. Most players wouldn't give a fan the time of day, but Tarkenton would always find time to sign autographs or talk. It didn't matter if he was right in the middle of dinner or in a hurry to get somewhere. I always remembered that."

The Blahaks have two other children, JaNae, 12, and Ryan, 9. Just like he had done with his oldest, Joe does not push.

"The thing that really makes me

proud of them are their academic accomplishments," Blahak said. "Those are the things that are really going to make a difference."



Asking who was the first Husker linemen to win the Outland Trophy probably could be a trivia question.

Although most Nebraska fans would nail the question, Larry Jacobson wasn't laughing about the award at the time.

Actually, he wasn't even sure what the whole thing meant.

"I asked Monte Kiffin, our defensive coach then, what it was," Jacobson said. "Nobody

ever heard of the thing. Kiffin couldn't even spell the thing for me."

That's O-U-T-L-A-N-D, and Jacobson earned every letter in 1971.

A first-round draft choice of the New York Giants in 1972, Jacobson pioneered a dominant front five that paved the way for the likes of Rich Glover, Willie Harper and John Dutton. Jacobson's line helped the Huskers corral Oklahoma's Greg Pruitt and Alabama's Johnny Musso.

The 6-foot-5 Jacobson, an All-American who had his No. 75 jersey retired by the University in 1994, has been a stockbroker for the past 19 years — the last 11 with Dean Witter Reynolds in Lincoln.

His memory of the 71 Huskers is one that still leaves him awestruck.

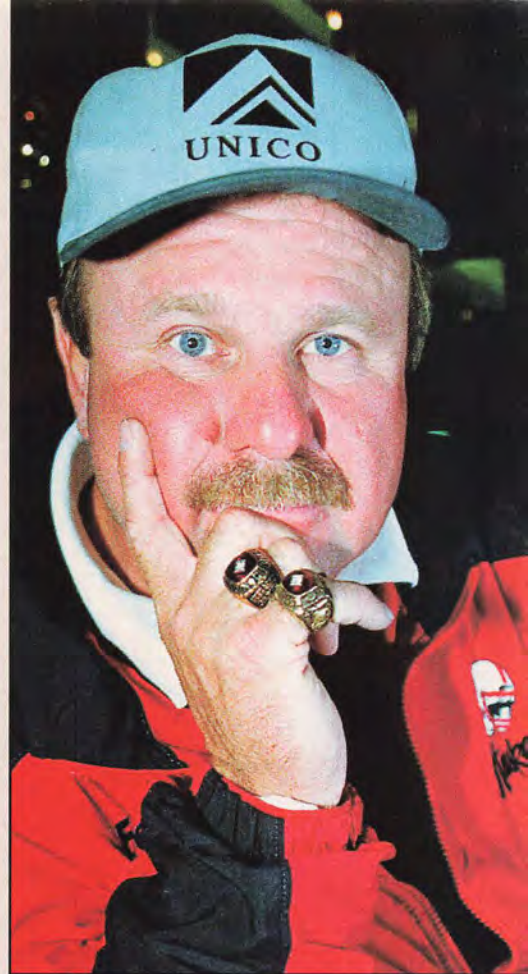


Photo by Bob Berry

Blahak has two championship rings to show for his NU career.

LARRY JACOBSON

"We didn't really know how good we were," Jacobson said. "If we would have known how good we were when we were there, it would have been scary."

Coach Bob Devaney and his staff kept the players guessing.

"I remember we were playing Minnesota and he took me out of a game because I missed a tackle," Jacobson said. "I can't even explain how mad I was. (Devaney) always did stuff like that. I firmly believe that is what made us the ultimate team. He was chewing guys out all the time. You were only as good as your last play."

Jacobson, a Sioux Falls, S.D., native, believes that the team was so good, none will ever match the accomplishments it achieved.

"I firmly believe that the team (Nebraska) had last year

and the team they have this year will never be held in the same light as the teams back then," Jacobson said.

"Mostly because we were the first ones to win a title, but also because it is just a different era. Besides Oklahoma, nobody ever came close to us. We simply dominated everyone."

"In 1971 we had three players, Jerry Tagge, Jeff Kinney and myself, drafted in the first round," he said. "That is just unheard of."

Jacobson attends the majority of the home Husker games, and he laughs about how good his seat assignment is. Jacobson suffered a career-ending ankle injury with the



Bill Janssen, a defensive tackle on the '71 team, remained in Lincoln and is now an Assistant Vice President/Investment Officer at FirstTier Bank.

Giants, and returned to Lincoln to work on his MBA in the mid-1970s. When he was assigned tickets, he found that he was situated in the 75th row in the North end zone.

"I couldn't get up the

stairs, so they gave me great seats," Jacobson said. "I got seats in the South end zone in the 16th row right by the aisle. I've had them ever since."

Jacobson and his ex-wife, Barb, have one daughter,



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Amy, who is a proficient junior high volleyball player.

"She's five-foot-six," Jacobson said proudly. "I can't figure out where she got all that height."



Defensive linemen at California City College in San Jose have a huge advantage.

They have Rich Glover as their teacher.

"Sometimes they tell me, 'Coach, we're not like you, we'll never be like you,'" Glover said. "But all I tell them is, 'That doesn't mean you can't try.' I coach based on what I saw in myself. I tell them that they can see the same thing that I saw. All they have to do is try."

Few offensive linemen ever looked at the Jersey City, N.J., native, and saw anything they liked. They usually saw No. 79's back as he prepared to wrap up their ballcarrier. He usually saw them panting

and gasping for breath between plays.

"Back when they used to have that college all-star game, I was in camp with Tom Brahaney when we were preparing for the game," said former

Nebraska cornerback Joe Blahak, referring to the All-American center from Oklahoma. "Brahaney told me that he thought he did a pretty good job against Glover. I said 'Tom, the man had 15 unassisted tackles in that game, you call that a good job?' It was pretty funny."

In 1971, Glover led the Huskers with 46 unassisted tackles. His relentless play has carried over to his teaching and coaching. Glover, currently a junior high teacher and assistant college coach, has been shaping minds in his mirror image ever since he left the playing field after his NFL

career with the New York Giants ended in the mid-1970s.

"I try to put everything I learned from all of my coaches together," Glover said. "Coach

Devaney, Coach Kiffin, Coach (Jim)

Walden, it's all there when I coach. I always treat my students and players the way I always wanted to be treated.

"It all pays off when I have a player come back to me and tell me that I was right," he said. "That makes it all worthwhile for me."

Glover, who won the Outland and Lombardi trophies in 1972, was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in South Bend, Ind., in August. He is the first player from the 1971 team to be so honored.

"That really makes me feel good," Glover said. "I know that there will always be

people in Nebraska who really appreciated all the hard work that I did at Nebraska. I wasn't a showboat guy, and neither was our team. The fans in Nebraska appreciated that."

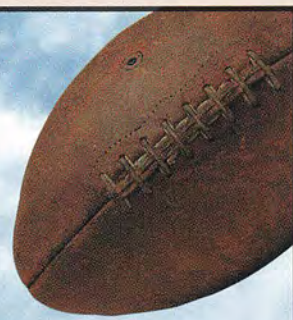
Glover lives in San Jose with his wife, Sonja, and their 12-year-old son, Richard. Their daughter Drhue, 18, attends Clark College in Atlanta. He also has two children from a previous marriage: Jaron, 23, and Nicole, 19. Glover was an assistant coach for Warren Powers and Jim Walden at Washington State in the 1970s and 1980s, and he said coaching at the highest level again is a goal he has set for himself.

"It's what I am best at, I know that," Glover said. "My players know that when they do something they have to do it in a disciplined manner or they will come off the field and they'll have to stand next to me." **NSM**

RICH GLOVER



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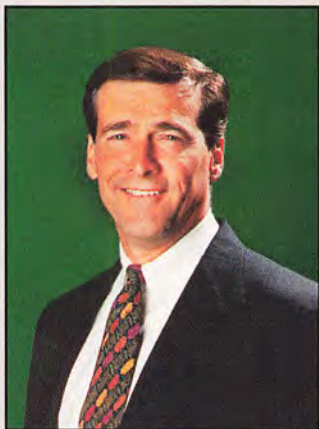
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Big Plays and Touching Moments

Nebraska 35-Oklahoma 31.

Biggest upset: 1978, Nebraska 17-Oklahoma 14.

Best hit: 1978, Husker John Ruud's bone-crunching kickoff tackle of Sooner Kelly Phelps

Best trick play: 1979, Tom Osborne's fumbleroosky run by John Havekost in the first half and Randy Schleusener for a touchdown in the second half.

Most devastating trick play: 1976, Oklahoma's hook and lateral in the final minute to set up the winning touchdown.

Second most devastating trick play: 1985, Sooner Keith Jackson's tight end reverse for an 88-yard touchdown.

Best catch: 1986, Sooner Keith Jackson's one-handed sideline grab to keep a late game-winning rally alive.

Best run: 1971, Husker Johnny Rodgers' 72-yard punt return for a touchdown.

Second best run: 1983, Sooner Spencer Tillman's 18-yard scamper capped by a flying five-yard leap into the end zone.

Most hated player: The Boz.

Most audacious player: Bandana-wearing Thomas Lott encouraging Husker fans in 1978 to boo him some more.

Mr. Bulletin Board: 1987, Husker Broderick Thomas.

Worst theory: The Sooner Jinx.

Most disruptive coach: Barry Switzer and his flamboyant surprise visit to the Bob Devaney television show in Lincoln on the eve of an NU-OU showdown.

Most angry coach: Tom Osborne when told in 1978 that his Orange Bowl opponent would be Oklahoma, the team he had upset the week before.

Most miserable conditions: 1988, the driving sleet in Norman that pelted south end-zone fans out of the stadium before halftime in the 7-3 Nebraska win.

Most obnoxious song: Boomer Sooner.

Most obnoxious fans: Sooner roughnecks who taunt opposing players during warmups.

Worst sound: 1984, the sickening clunk of the ball hitting the upright on Dale Klein's missed field-goal attempt from chip-shot range.

Most deafening sound: The roar that followed Sooner Billy Sims' end-of-the-game fumble in 1978 caused by Jim Pillen's tackle and recovered by Husker Jeff Hanson.

Finally, the best post-

game comment and post-game picture to put this outstanding rivalry in perspective: You may remember the terrific 1986 battle between Nebraska and Oklahoma. The Sooners shocked Husker fans with a dramatic come-from-behind victory at Memorial Stadium. When I questioned Husker defensive back Bryan Siebler, who stood exhausted at midfield, I expected to hear the same disappointment that was evident throughout the stands. I was stunned by his response: "That was a great college football game. I don't have anything left, I left everything I had on the field."

What more could we have asked for?

And it's the picture hanging on the wall in my son's room that says even more. Players from both teams, who had joined in ferocious battle intent on beating the other, were now joined hand-in-hand, kneeling with one mind at midfield giving thanks to God.

That seemingly out-of-character Nebraska-Oklahoma memory — offering a lesson in character to us all — tops the list. *NSM*

John Knicely can be seen week-nights on WOWT Channel 6 in Omaha.

LATER THIS MONTH, A great tradition for Nebraska football fans will come to an end. For more than two decades Husker fans have been pulling against Oklahoma fans on opposite ends of the Thanksgiving turkey wishbone.

Next year, that changes with the advent of the Big 12 Conference. The season-ending showdown between the Big Red of the North and the Big Red of the South won't take place anymore unless the two teams happen to meet in a postseason conference championship game.

Personally, I think the change is fine. The new conference actually should give us more excitement with improved competition throughout the season, along with the continued promise of a "big game" finale against Colorado.

But having watched and covered the Nebraska-Oklahoma rivalry for the past 25 years, I've decided to list my all-time best memories in the series knowing that it may inspire you to come up with your own:

Best game: The shoot-out in Norman 1971,

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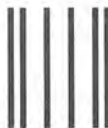
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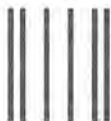
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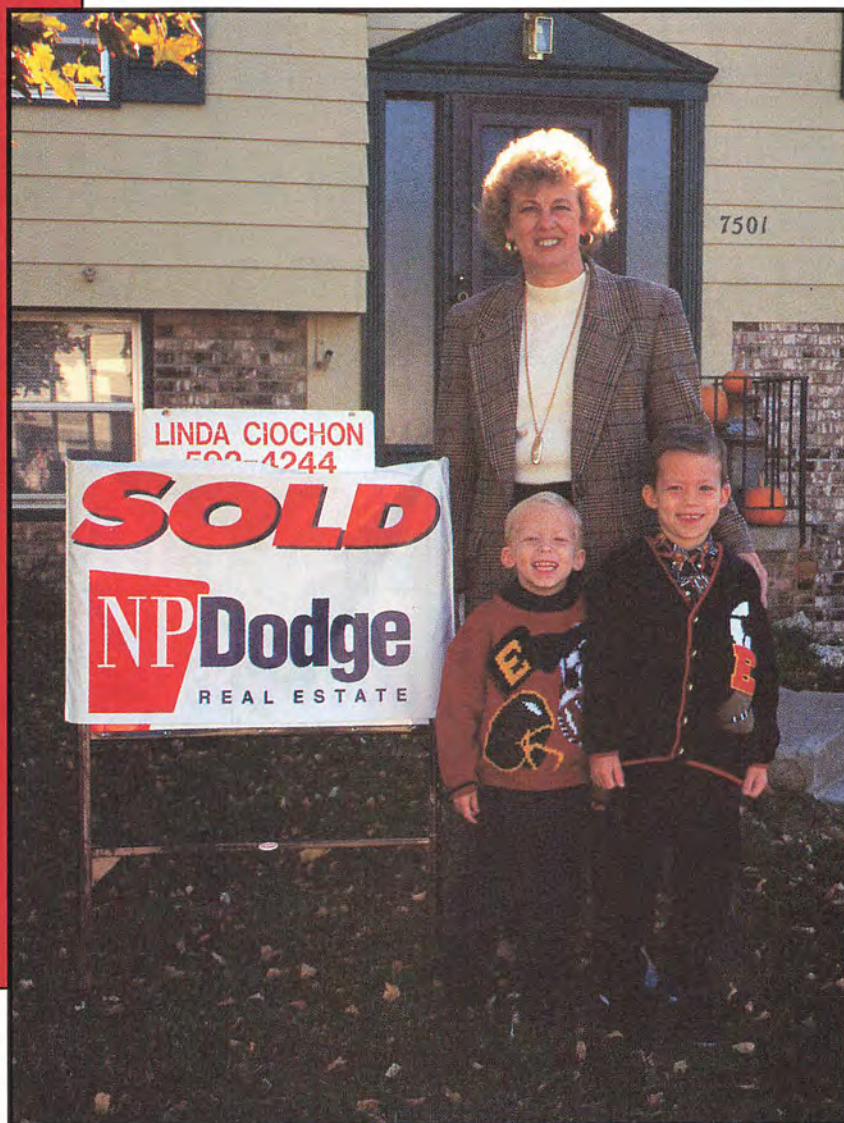
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